COMMUNITY READINESS FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION: THE YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION READINESS AND NEEDS SCALE (YVP-RNS)

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Introduction

Much attention in the field of community-based youth violence prevention has focussed on the importance of evidence-based programmes and practices - there are multiple lists of effective and promising programmes (e.g., Blueprints, Crimesolutions.gov), and reviews of best practices in the US and internationally are readily available (e.g., World Health Organization, 2010). Less attention has been directed towards how to assess and prioritise actions based on community "readiness" for action, although it is beginning to be recognised as an important component of implementation, scale up, and sustainability (Ebbesen, Heath, Naylor, and Anderson, 2004; Laverack and Wallerstein, 2001; Parker, Alcaraz, and Payne, 2011; Sabol, Coulton, and Korbin, 2004). This is complicated, in part, by a lack of consensus on the precise definition of community readiness, the key components most relevant for prevention, and how best to assess and enhance readiness for youth violence prevention across different communities, and how to use this information for community engagement and planning for prevention.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a new tool for assessing community readiness for youth violence prevention and discuss how it can be useful for prevention planning. We begin by reviewing the concept of readiness as applied to both individual behaviour change and community-level efforts in health promotion and prevention. We discuss different community-level models and related assessments that have been utilised in the field, including the Community Readiness Model (CRM), the Communities that Care (CTC) model, the Trauma-Informed Community Building Model (TICB), and the World Health Organization Readiness Assessment for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment (RAP-CM). Building on this previous work, we propose a comprehensive model of readiness for community youth violence prevention efforts that incorporates six key components: (1) motivation, (2) drivers, (3) services, (4) policies/plans, (5) capacity, and (6) evidence. Based on this model, we describe a new scale, the Youth Violence Prevention Readiness and Needs Scale (YVP-RNS). We present case studies from three cities in the US and Bolivia. We conclude with suggested uses of the YVP-RNS across diverse contexts.

What is Readiness and Why is it Important for Community Youth Violence Prevention?

Individual-level behavioural interventions have long embraced the importance of "readiness to change" as critical for successful outcomes. In other words, if a person is not motivated and ready to change a specific behaviour, it is unlikely that even the most powerful intervention will have a significant and lasting impact. Two popular and well-researched models of individual change are Motivational Interviewing (MI) and the Transtheoretical Model (TTM). MI is an evidence-based approach to counselling using conversation and collaboration with clients to address ambivalence to change. A primary goal of MI is to increase readiness, willingness, and belief in one's ability to change a specific behaviour. Recent conceptualisations of MI emphasise four broad processes: engaging, focussing, evoking and planning. Over 200 randomised-controlled trials of MI have been
conducted demonstrating its effectiveness (Miller and Rollnick, 2013). The TTM also focuses on individual change processes, but seeks to integrate constructs from multiple theories into a comprehensive theory of change. Five key stages of change are emphasised: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The model emphasises important precursors to action, as only a minority of individuals (typically less than 20 percent) seeking help are in the action stage (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992). Recent studies have shown that both MI and TTM are effective in increasing individual motivation and behaviour change for risk behaviours (Prochaska et al., 2008).

How does this approach to readiness focussed on individual motivation translate to community prevention programmes generally and specifically for youth violence prevention? Communities also can be seen as varying in the degree to which they are motivated, ready, and able to change, and this variation likely will impact the implementation, outcomes, and sustainability of health promotion and prevention programmes (Edwards et al., 2000; Plested et al., 1999, 2006). Most notable among efforts to translate individual models of readiness to community change is the Community Readiness Model (CRM), developed at the Tri-Ethnic Center at Colorado State University. This model draws on the TTM with its emphasis on stages of change (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992), incorporating relevant findings from social action research (e.g., Warren, 1978). As noted in the CRM manual (2014, p.4) "Communities are a lot like individuals in the sense that they move through stages before they are ready to implement programs, develop and deliver interventions, and take other actions to address an issue in the community." Five key factors linked broadly to community readiness for prevention and health promotion are highlighted: (1) knowledge of the issue, (2) knowledge of efforts, (3) community climate, (4) leadership, and (5) resources. Based on a set of semi-structured interviews with key community respondents, readiness is coded on a scale of 1 to 9 aligned with stages of readiness (no awareness, denial/resistance, vague awareness, pre-planning, preparation, initiation, stabilisation, expansion/confirmation, and community ownership). The CRM has been used across the U.S. to assess readiness for a variety of health promotion and prevention efforts including drug and alcohol use, HIV/AIDS, child abuse, animal control, and intimate partner violence, although it has not been applied specifically to youth violence prevention.

More specific to youth violence and risk prevention, the Communities that Care (CTC) model is one of the most widely used approaches to community mobilisation for youth risk prevention in the US (http://www.commuitiesthatcare.net). The process for community engagement includes a component on readiness focussed on issues such as agreement on problems to be addressed, a common definition of prevention, support for collaboration, and involvement of schools and key leaders. This helps identify potential stumbling blocks and challenges to a coordinated prevention effort. Because the CTC model relies heavily on youth surveys of risk and protective factors to guide programming, readiness is conceptualised primarily in terms of a community’s ability to implement this type of model rather than a more preliminary assessment designed to determine priorities and areas in need of and ready for intervention as a prerequisite for more comprehensive
prevention programming. This is particularly critical in low-resource settings in lower and middle-income countries where capacity for prevention may be severely curtailed and prioritisation of activities based on readiness to implement is critical. It also is important that conceptualisations and assessment of readiness include directions for action and appropriate and feasible interventions to increase readiness, if necessary.

The issue of readiness in less resourced settings also has informed a more recent approach to community development called the Trauma-Informed Community Building (TICB) Model (Collins et al., 2010; Weinstein, Wolin, and Rose, 2014)). This model emphasises the traumatic impact of structural conditions such as chronic poverty, neighbourhood violence, and inequality. These structural conditions can result in barriers to change beyond lack of resources including low levels of trust and social cohesion, instability and mobility, disempowerment, lack of community ownership, and inability to envision a better future. Trauma-informed community building increases readiness through de-escalating stress and chaos, fostering resiliency, strengthening social connections, and recognising trauma. The primary focus is on "doing no harm," implementing only long-term and sustainable programmes, fostering community empowerment, and ensuring sustainability (Weinstein et al., 2014).

Another example that has been applied directly to prevention of violence in childhood (specifically violence against children) at the country level is the World Health Organization's Readiness Assessment for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment (RAP-CM). This measure was developed based on a conceptual review of relevant current models, international expert consultation, and focus groups in six countries: Brazil, China, Macedonia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa (WHO, 2013). This goal was to help to identify gaps in readiness for prevention of child maltreatment globally and inform plans to remedy these gaps, establish a baseline measure of capacity, help to allocate resources, assist in identifying appropriate interventions, and function as a teaching tool to introduce concepts to key stakeholders (Mikton et al., 2011). Based on interviews with key informants representing multiple sectors, the RAP-CM taps ten key dimensions of readiness: (1) key country conditions; (2) problem assessment; (3) legislation, mandates, policies, and plans; (4) will to address the problem; (5) institutional links and inter-sectoral collaboration; (6) institutional resources and efficiency; (7) material resources; (8) human and technical resources; (9) informal social resources; and (10) programme implementation and evaluation (World Health Organization, 2013). This measure is designed to provide a snapshot of the overall state of readiness in a given setting at one point in time on all of the major dimensions. Each dimension receives a quantitative raw score that is then converted to a 1-10 score, and totaled for a possible total of 100 points, with graphic representation of these scores to illustrate strengths and weaknesses along the dimensions.

Building on community mobilisation for youth violence prevention efforts, coupled with work on the concept of readiness for prevention more broadly, we developed a Youth Violence Prevention Readiness/Needs Scale (YVP-RNS) specifically to assess readiness for youth violence prevention.
Our goal was to develop a measure that could be used in communities around the world. We paid special attention to capturing dimensions of readiness likely to impact youth violence prevention in trauma-impacted and low-resource settings, such as infrastructure, persistence of social problems, presence of gangs, and lack of community ownership and agency (Collins et al., 2000; Oetting et al., 1995).

The 49-item YVP-RNS taps six key components of readiness: (1) Motivation; (2) Drivers; (3) Services; (4) Policies/Plans; (5) Capacity; and (6) Evidence. Because motivation is central to readiness, it is divided into three sub-scales (awareness of problem, priority and will to address, and beliefs about preventability of youth violence). Similar to the RAP-CM, the measure also uses open-ended short answers to generate additional information about drivers, needs, gaps, and opportunities. The complete measure with subscales indicated is provided in Appendix A.

The measure is designed to be administered to a sample of 15-20 key informants, including politicians, agency administrators, community resident group leaders, agency directors, and others most knowledgeable about the community. It can be used to examine key components of readiness in order to identify gaps and areas in need of strengthening, for instance, if most residents believe that youth violence is not preventable, it would be important to address this issue before implementing prevention programmes. On the other hand, it can be a useful tool for mobilising leaders to develop and implement feasible solutions by creating a shared understanding of prevention needs, including drivers of violence, available evidence, potential data sources, key entry points, and strategies most likely to be successful.

Case Study 1: Pilot Study of The YVP-RNS in Wilmington, Delaware, US

Wilmington, DE, US: A high-violence, low-resource community. Although rates of youth violence in cities across the US, on average, have declined over the past two decades, in some urban areas youth violence has increased significantly. Wilmington is a case in point--its violent crime problem is alarmingly severe, getting younger, and growing. Over the last decade, the city has experienced substantial increases in aggravated assaults, robberies, homicides, and shootings. In December 2014, Newsweek Magazine dubbed Wilmington “Murder Town USA,” a dubious distinction repeated in The Wall Street Journal in March 2015. Wilmington now has the 4th highest reported homicide rate in the US, nearly six times greater than the US average.

Although not large in comparison to major metropolitan areas, Wilmington is Delaware’s largest city, with a population of 71,525. It also is the state’s centre of commerce where many of the Fortune 500 Companies are incorporated; many of Delaware’s largest employers are located in the city, with about 54,000 people working there. It is situated on the northeastern corridor of Interstate 95, only 25 miles southwest of Philadelphia and 65 miles northeast of Baltimore. Wilmington has 39,241 African-American residents, comprising approximately 55 percent of the population. The
remaining 25,492 residents (35.6 percent of the population) are White, and 9,588 (13.4 percent) are Hispanic of any race.

On quality-of-life measures, Wilmington ranks poorly. Specifically, 23.5 percent of residents live in poverty, 12.6 percent are unemployed, 19.9 percent of adults have no high school diploma, and homeowners do not occupy 53.4 percent of housing units. Furthermore, 64 percent of births are out of wedlock, and 66 percent of children reside in single-parent households. All of these figures are well above state and national averages. And even though Wilmington contains merely 7.7 percent of Delaware’s population, it is responsible for nearly half of the state’s homicides, more than half of the shootings, and more than one-quarter of overall violent crime (Harris, Salt, and Huenke, 2012).

Given the severity of the youth violence problem there have been multiple anti-violence policies and programmes over the years, albeit without much impact on youth violence outcomes. Many of these efforts specifically targeted crime control, such as the National Institute of Justice supported Violence Reduction Network, the State Police Gun Investigation Unit, and the Attorney General's gang prosecution unit. Prevention programmes have been scattered across the city, implemented by public and private agencies, but with relatively little planning and coordination. Community readiness has not been considered, to date, in these efforts.

**Survey participants.** The YVP-RNS was administered to 23 community representatives over the course of three months in 2015. Most participants were in the 35-44 years-old age range, and they were approximately evenly divided by gender. The majority of participants were African-American. They worked in the Wilmington community in diverse jobs including community leader, executive director, case manager, and parole officer.

**Findings.** There are different approaches to utilising the data from the survey responses to assess readiness and need. For questions with rating scales it is possible to average scores across items in a given scale or to look at specific questions. Similar to scoring of the RAP-CM it is possible to construct radar charts that map multiple responses in a single diagram for comparative purposes. To illustrate these different options, we provide a brief overview of the Wilmington, DE responses for each of the six components of the YVP-RNS (Motivation, Drivers, Services, Policies/Plans, Capacity, and Evidence) using each of these approaches.
Motivation

(a) Awareness of Problem (Items 1-2)

This sub-scale had two questions, represented graphically below. As can be seen, the majority of participants agreed that youth violence is a serious problem in their community. Over 65 percent participants “strongly agree” that youth violence is an issue, and 50 percent “strongly agree” that gang violence in particular is a challenge in their community.

(b) Motivation and Will to Address (Items 3-6)

This sub-scale had 4 questions. Respondents indicated 100 percent agreement that youth violence is an issue that must be addressed in order for the community to prosper. Additionally, over 90 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that there is a lot of concern about youth violence in the community. However, over 30 percent of participants disagreed that youth violence is a high priority for residents in the community, and that number rose to over 35 percent when asked if youth violence prevention was a high priority for leaders in the community.
(c) Beliefs About Preventability of Youth Violence (Items 7-10)

This sub-scale had 4 items. Over 90 percent of respondents believed that there were measures that could be taken in the community to prevent youth violence. About 50 percent of participants “strong agree” that people are not born violent, but learn aggressive/violent behaviour. Surprisingly, over 45 percent of participants indicated that there are so many deep-rooted problems in the community that there isn’t much to do to prevent youth violence at the moment.
Drivers of Youth Violence (Items 11-22)

This component was measured by twelve questions that addressed potential causes of youth violence in the community. Perceptions were measured by asking respondents to rate on a scale of 0-3 their agreement or disagreement with 12 potential drivers of youth violence that have been validated in the empirical literature. Participants indicated many reasons why youth in their community become involved in violence. As can be seen in Figure 11, gang involvement was the top noted reason why youth become involved in violence (rated 2.27), followed by lack of role models (1.91) and lack of parental supervision (1.78).

Youth in my community get involved in violence because of:
Respondents were then asked to generate the top three reasons why they believe youth become involved in violence (write in questions). When respondents were asked to generate their own top three reasons why youth become involved in violence, the top indicated reason was poor parenting and supervision, followed by monetary gain, having nothing to do, influence from peers, drugs, and pride/ego/status (Figure 12). Other interesting responses included that youth have a sense of powerlessness, they’ve become numb to violence, violence is glorified in society, and violent video game and movie influence.

The top reasons they gave were:
Services (Items 23-32)

Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they had knowledge of various types of programmes within their community. The most well-known programmes were alcohol/drug abuse programmes and after-school/recreation programmes, followed by parent training programmes and programmes to get kids out of gangs of prevent them from joining gangs.
Three questions asked participants about their knowledge of current policies and plans. The majority of participants indicated that they did not know if there was an “Action Plan” to prevent youth violence in the community and that they did not know if there were policies in place to protect young people’s rights in the community. Of the approximately 17 percent of participants who indicated that there were such policies in place, they noted that these policies included a School Code of Conduct, Truancy Court, and Family Court. Over 25 percent of respondents indicated that there are “tough on crime” policies in place, including gun crime enforcement, high bail practices, and mandatory minimums.
Respondents noted that the following policies were in place to protect young people’s rights:

- Family court services, juvenile justice, Office of Defense Services, and specific laws (1007, Civil Citation, Truancy Court, Community Court)
- School Code of Conduct, US Constitution, Family Court
- There are policies in place, however, fear is driving people to focus on punitive measures as opposed to preventive measures

If you answered “yes” (above), please list these policies:

- Gun crime enforcement laws
- Gun possession, violent crime
- High bail practices
- Incarceration without treatment in lieu of treatment
- The level of incarceration for young offenders in DE exceeds national/international trends
- Minimum mandatory sentences
Capacity (Items 36-41)

Six questions asked participants about their perceptions of capacity in the community. The majority of participants noted that youth violence prevention programmes are currently not well funded. About 27 percent of respondents indicated that resources would currently allow for a full set of programmes to cover some of the community, and 23 percent indicated that it would be possible to provide for small-scale pilot programmes or full programmes in one area of the community. Almost 50 percent of respondents indicated that the number of professionals specialising in youth violence in the community is “barely adequate.” Only 4 percent indicated that the number of professionals in “adequate.” Almost half of participants noted that there are “some NGOs” in the community that can implement programmes, while almost 20 percent said “not at all.” In terms of integration of prevention services, zero respondents indicated that these services are well integrated, while over 60 percent indicated that services are “somewhat integrated” or “not integrated.” When asked to choose the level of funding that respondents would put towards prevention in the community, 43.5 percent indicated that they would put 51-75 percent of funding toward prevention, and 30.4 percent indicated they would allocate between 26-50 percent toward prevention. Figure 26 presents an overview of participants’ views on capacity for violence prevention, using average scores on a scale from 0-3.

Figure 26. Overview of Capacity for Prevention

![Radar chart showing capacity for prevention](image)

Evidence (Items 42-49).

Eight questions measured participants’ view of the available violence prevention evidence. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent scientific evidence is available and used by service providers. About 35 percent of participants indicated that scientific evidence is “used somewhat” when shaping decisions in youth violence prevention. When asked about accessibility of reliable information on EBPs in the field, only 8.7 percent indicated that the data was not
accessible, while about 35 percent indicated that data is somewhat accessible. With regards to accessible scientific information on youth violence indicators, over 40 percent did not know, while 26 percent noted that this information is “accessible.” Respondents rated the quality and accessibility of national, state, and local government data the highest, followed by violence data from universities. Hospital data was rated the lowest.

Participants were then asked to rate the quality and accessibility of available police data, national/state/local government data, violence data from universities, other adverse childhood experiences data from universities, and hospital data on a scale of 0-10 (0= data source doesn’t exist, does not meet any minimal standards, or is not accessible beyond the specific agency; 10= the source of data exists, is accessible and of use to the community). As is evident from Figure 30, participants rated National, state, or local government data the highest (6.41), followed by University violence data (6.31).
Qualitative Questions (Shorts Answers 1-8)

What agencies/programmes/services do you see as potentially providing the immediate “entry point” for enhancing services in youth violence prevention in your community (for example, work with schools to teach social skills)?

Many respondents believed that an immediate entry point for enhancing services could be schools and school resources, churches, governments and social services agencies, mental health providers, partnerships between nonprofits and the state, and employment services. Many noted that working with parents on parenting skills and through afterschool programmes could be effective. Gang prevention programmes and social skills training also were mentioned.

In your opinion, what key pieces of legislation or policies for youth violence prevention in the community still are needed?

Respondents had a variety of ideas on this topic, most of which include social services for youth. Some ideas that were mentioned included: mandated counselling for youth and families, employment and post-secondary training, and that legislation should focus on treatment rather than punishment. Many respondents noted that parents should be involved, engaged, and held accountable. One respondent noted that “it is not social programmes’ job to raise youth—the community needs to commit.” Others suggested that it might be helpful to have incentives for employers to hire youth and for barriers to employment such as felony check boxes to be removed.
In your opinion, what capacity, resources, or institutions are needed to increase the ability to implement and deliver effective youth violence prevention in the community? Please explain.

Survey respondents indicated that collaboration between providers is essential, and that collaboration is needed between NGOs and state and local law enforcement. Integration between agencies and sharing of information and resources (perhaps via data centre) was also mentioned. Respondents noted a need for increased funding for youth centres, youth crime prevention workers, and full-time, consistent, and committed instructors and mentors to deliver instruction to youth. Job training programmes, education, a youth justice centre, mental health providers and “talk therapy,” and comprehensive gang outreach programmes were also suggested to increase ability to implement effective programmes. One respondent noted that an entire staff dedicated to identifying at-risk youth and mentoring them would be beneficial. Others suggested the need for increased funding generally and grants to adequately fund existing staff.

What do you think are some common misconceptions in your community about youth violence?

The respondents on this survey held a variety of views on this topic. Some respondents felt that a common misconception is that youth violence is just “kids being kids” and that the kids will just “grow out of it,” or “if they did not kill anyone it is not a big deal.” Other respondents believed that the misconception exists that all inner city youth are violent, that they are just “bad,” and that youth get involved in crime because they are “just bored.” Some noted that race is used as a “scapegoat of sorts” for the media with regards to violence. Still others believe that the misconceptions are that the problem of youth violence is related to education and employment deficits. Others indicated that some people have the misconception of having lots of hope in youth and believing that the youth have the same hope.

What do you think are some practical roadblocks in your community for preventing youth violence?

Many respondents indicated that lack of funding and resources was a big obstacle in their community, and that there is an unwillingness to fund large-scale youth employment programmes and provide meaningful guidance. Others noted that there is a lack of leadership on this issue and that leaders are “out of tune and unaware of the real issues” in the community. Many participants pointed to lack of engagement from parents as a practical roadblock. Others noted that community attitude, fear, or lack of caring are significant barriers to change. A few participants indicated that lack of cooperation and the lack of integration between current service providers and funding sources encourages competition instead of collaboration.
What do you think the majority of residents in the community you serve would suggest as action steps to prevent youth violence?

A significant number of respondents indicated that the community would suggest jobs or job education training programmes to prevent youth violence. Others mentioned ideas such as later programme hours (after 7 pm), having more engaging activities for the youth, community centres, community policing, faith activities, and curfews that are enforced. One respondent indicated that the community might suggest people getting together and coming up with an action plan that can provide results on youth violence. Finally, one participant noted that he or she believed the community would say “lock them up, lock up the parents.”

Do you have any other suggestions for preventing youth violence in your community?

Participants suggested a wide variety of ideas such as: more engaging activities later in the evening, enlisting credible messengers to deliver a well-funded programme and pay the youth to fix/address their most significant challenges, not allowing youth to leave school, and listening to the youth instead of creating programmes without their input. Many respondents indicated that parent training and parent engagement is essential. Many respondents mentioned treatment and family support. Several respondents noted the need for a cultural shift, and one noted that it is necessary to “transform the nation’s view of how violence is an acceptable means of resolving conflict.” Another participant wrote, “We must teach accountability to everyone involved, funders, parents, kids, schools, police (it’s too much of a blame game).” Finally, one respondent said that it is necessary to “put the same energy into saving every youth that would be used to save yours.”

If you were the head of an organisation or agency and had $20 million dollars to spend on youth violence prevention in your community, what are the top 5 things that you would do with the funding?

As a first priority, respondents mentioned many ideas such as: hire experienced and motivated staff with social capital in the community, build community centres with mentors, community policing, educate youth on practical life skills, extend programme hours of existing programmes, increase jobs and job training, put fathers in schools more often, mental health programmes, remove as many youth as possible from “hot spots,” research evidence-based programmes, and work with families in their own homes.

Other priority areas included giving more incentives for youth and getting the word out about existing programmes. Some respondents indicated that they would implement EBPs on a pilot programme basis, apply the current trends in youth violence prevention, and utilise evaluation data for decision-making. Other participants noted that they would take youth out of the city on trips,
provide healthy food, and provide community talk therapy. Others indicated that they would employ residents to fix up the community so the youth have a better place to be, provide youth empowerment programmes, and involve current gang members in their efforts. One respondent wrote that he or she would “empower youth to radically address their major concerns—and get out of their way.”

**Case Study 2: Pilot Study of The YVP-RNS in El Alto, Bolivia**

Founded in 1985, El Alto is one of the youngest cities in Bolivia, yet it is the second most populated city with 848,840 inhabitants (INE, 2014). Home of mainly rural immigrants of second and third generation, El Alto is known for being a young but rapid growth city, with 61 percent of its population under 28 years old (INE, 2014). El Alto has 51 percent of the population who do not identify themselves with any indigenous population, 45 percent who consider themselves Aymaras, and 1.9 percent Quechuas (INE, 2014).

El Alto’s economy is mainly driven by the informal commerce sector (36 percent), followed by manufacture (19.2 percent) and construction (9.2 percent) (INE, 2014). Bolivia’s 1980’s economic crisis affected mainly indigenous rural communities forcing them to migrate to urban areas; additionally, this crisis also caused a re-localisation of mine workers. This migration generated a labour market structure characterised by precarious labour insertion, low salaries and low quality jobs (UNDP, 2016). This structure continues to be reproduced in the present and consequently, El Alto holds high levels of poverty, with 36 percent of its residents living in poverty (INE, 2014). In terms of socioeconomic composition, approximately a third of its population (32 percent) are low SES, 42 percent are considered medium vulnerable SES, 24 percent are considered middle class, and 2 percent are considered high SES (UNDP, 2016).

El Alto is considered one of the most dangerous cities in Bolivia. The 2011 victimisation survey from the Citizen Security National Observatory (Observatorio Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana, n.d.) showed that 86.8 percent of El Alto citizens perceive insecurity has increased in the last 12 months in the city and 85.1 percent said that they felt insecurity will increase in the next 12 months in El Alto. Additionally, according to the same survey, 77.8 percent of El Alto citizens believe they are likely and very likely to be victims of a crime outside their homes. Additionally, El Alto presents one of the highest homicide rates in the country, with 19.8 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2013 (UNDP, 2016). In the same year, Bolivia’s homicide was 8.3. Rape rate for every 100,000 habitants in El Alto for 2013 was 39.2, also above the national rate of 36 (UNDP, 2016). Finally, the robbery rate (62.5/100,000) in El Alto for 2013 was also one of the highest rates

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1 According to the latest Census, by 2012 Bolivia had 10,027,254 inhabitants.
2 Percentage of working population in this economic sector.
in the country compared to the national rate of 42/100,000 (UNDP, 2016). These indicators demonstrate that El Alto ranks amongst the cities with highest levels of both criminality and insecurity.

Youth violence has been fuelled by the rise of juvenile gangs across the city in the last years. According to police data, El Alto had 64 gangs in 2013 with a total of 2742 members. According to the data, 62 percent of these gangs are involved in alcohol consumption, 14 percent in alcohol and drug consumption, 5 percent in drug consumption and 18 percent in alcohol and inhalant consumption (ONSC, 2014). Additionally, according to police investigations, some gangs from El Alto are involved in drug selling. These investigations also indicate that some youth have been victims of assault from gang members just because they did not want to engage in drug or alcohol consumption (La Prensa, 2015).

Survey participants. The YVP-RNS was administered to 33 community representatives from El Alto, including leaders (17), residents (13) and practitioners (3). This data was gathered over the course of three months in 2016. In terms of the age of the participants, 39 percent were in the 45-54 age range, 24 percent in the 35-44 range and 21 percent in the 25-34 range. In terms of gender of the respondents, 45 percent were male and 55 percent female. The majority (76 percent) of the participants from El Alto indicated they identify themselves as Aymaras, 21 percent indicated they did not identify with any ethnic group and 3 percent said they identified as Quechuas. Among the diverse jobs and positions, the respondents held were departmental, municipal and community leaders as well as leaders from social movements.

Findings. We present findings to parallel presentation of data in the first case study. However, for purposes of space, we do not present item-specific graphs for these data, and only present a few figures.

Motivation

(a) Awareness of Problem (Items 1-2)

This sub-scale had two questions. The majority of the respondents (51 percent) agreed that youth violence is a serious problem in their community, and 49 percent of participants strongly agreed with that situation. When asked if they believed that gangs or organised youth violence were serious problems in their community, more than half of the respondents (54 percent) strongly agreed with this situation and 42 percent agreed.

(b) Motivation and Will to Address (Items 3-6)

This sub-scale had 4 questions. Almost all respondents (91 percent) indicated that in order for the community to move forward and prosper, youth violence must be addressed immediately.
Similarly, the majority of the respondents (79 percent) believed that there is a lot of concern in their communities regarding youth violence and how to prevent it. However, when asked if they believed that youth violence prevention is a high priority for the residents of their community, more than 30 percent indicated that this was not true. The number of respondents who believed that youth violence prevention is a high priority for the leaders of the community was 49 percent, with 6 percent indicating that they strongly agreed with this statement.

(c) Beliefs About Preventability of Youth Violence (Items 7-10)

This sub-scale had 4 items. Respondents indicated 100 percent agreement that youth violence can be prevented with the right programmes. Additionally, a great majority of respondents (97 percent) agreed that there are many things that can be done with the community to prevent youth violence. Similarly, all the respondents agreed that people are not born violent but learn aggressive and violent behaviour.

Drivers of Youth Violence (Items 11-22)

These questions asked about twelve potential causes of youth violence. Youth involvement in drug and alcohol consumption was the top reason why youth become involved in violence, followed by gang involvement, and lack of employment opportunities and good jobs. These are displayed graphically in the radar chart in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Drivers of Youth Violence

Additionally, respondents were asked to mention if they believed there are any other reasons youth get involved in violence that were not listed. Many respondents said that the lack of family support, the bad influence from their peers, the lack of opportunities for the youth, and monetary gain were other reasons they felt youth get involved in violence. Some respondents also added coming from dysfunctional or violent families, lack of recreational spaces, and for the feeling of being powerful.
Also mentioned occasionally were bullying, dropping out of school, lack of community cohesion and the mass media.

Respondents were asked to think about all of the different reasons youth get involved in violence and to mention what they believed were the top three most important factors. The top reason mentioned by respondents is that youth live with violent or dysfunctional families so they repeat the violent conduct they see in their families (domestic violence), or also because maybe they have been victims of child abuse/violence coming from their families. The other top reason mentioned by the respondents was peer influence. Examples of this included having friends who belong to gangs, and/or some friends threatening them or forcing them to engage in youth violence. The third most mentioned reason by respondents was the lack of family supervision, or poor parenting skills that includes the absence of the family in the house and lack of appropriate instruction in values in the home.

**Services (Items 23-32).**

In this section, respondents were asked to rate whether they knew about good programmes that youth and families in their community could go to. Respondents had to indicate to what extent they had knowledge about the different programmes within their community. The most known type of prevention programme by the respondents were sports/recreation programmes, with 61 percent of the respondents indicating that they knew a few of these programmes in their community. In addition, 55 percent said they knew a few job training programmes in their community, followed by drug/alcohol abuse prevention programmes (30 percent). On the other hand, 91 percent of respondents indicated that they did not know of the existence of any programmes to prevent joining gangs or to help them get out of gangs.

Participants also were asked whether there were any other programmes they knew of in their community besides the ones mentioned. They mentioned programmes that work with the community such as “resilient neighbours” programmes and programmes that provide help to young people who live in the streets According to the participants, the most effective programmes to prevent youth violence in their community are mainly those that work on parenting skills, followed by job training programmes, and community policing. Community service programmes, programmes to prevent school drop-out and alcohol and drug prevention programmes were also mentioned as effective to prevent youth violence.

**Policies/Plans (Items 33-35).**

Participants were also asked to think about policies, laws, and action plans that they knew about in their community designed to prevent youth violence. The majority of the participants (58 percent) indicated that there is not an Action Plan to prevent youth violence in their community. Additionally, a large number of respondents (44 percent) indicated that there are no polices in place
that protect young people’s rights, 31 percent said that they did not know whether there are policies that protect youth’s rights in place in their communities, but 25 percent expressed that there were, in fact, some policies in place.

The main policy mentioned was the Child and Adolescent Code that became a bill on July 2014. Respondents also referred to the work the Children and Adolescent’s Defender Offices provide at a municipal level as they are in charge of protecting children and adolescent’s rights. Another policy mentioned were the school vouchers to prevent adolescents to drop from school. Other policies mentioned were: NGOs that work with adolescents who live in the streets, vouchers for Bolivian mothers, and crime control plans from the Police. Participants were also asked if they believe there were policies in place that they consider “tough on crime” towards young people, and 49 percent indicated that there are these type of policies currently in place. The “tough on crime” policies that were mentioned by the respondents were: law enforcement by the police and the Ministry of Government, the Child and Adolescent Code especially by reducing the legal age of youth labour from 12 to 10 and by lowering the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 14. Another policy mentioned was the current intention by the Ministry of Government to reduce the age of immutability from 18 to 16.3

**Capacity (Items 36-41)**

Participants were asked about their perception of capacity (financing, expertise, resources for youth violence prevention) in their community though six questions. The majority of respondents indicated that youth violence prevention programmes are not funded at all, and 33 percent said that these programmes were not well funded. Only 9 percent of respondents indicated that the programmes were well funded and 3 percent adequately funded. In terms of scalability, 30 percent said that with the right amount of funds the community would be able to cover all or most of the community with a full set of programmes. However, with the current funding, 27 percent indicated that it is possible to implement small scale pilot programmes or full programme in one area. Additionally, 70 percent of respondents thought the number of professionals specialising in youth violence prevention in the community is not adequate at all for large-scale implementation of youth violence prevention programmes and 21 percent indicated that the number of professionals is barely adequate. Further, 55 percent indicated that there are some strong NGOs that can implement youth prevention programmes, and 36 percent said that there were not NGO’s at all that have the capacity to implement these programmes.

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3 According to the current Child and Adolescent Code, criminal responsibility starts at age 14 however, these offenders are sent to special youth centres until they turn 18. After 18, all criminals are sent to jail.
Participants were also asked how well integrated the various youth violence prevention programmes were from public and private agencies in their community and a majority (64 percent) indicated that the programmes are not integrated; however, 27 percent said these programmes were somewhat integrated. Finally, 45 percent believed that the percentage of funding from all available sources to allocate toward prevention in the community should be between 51 percent to 75 percent, and 36 percent believed that 21 percent to 50 percent should be the percentage allocated.

Figure 2 illustrates participant’s views on capacity for violence prevention. This graph uses average scores on a scale from 0 to 3.

Evidence (Items 42-49)

Participants were asked to evaluate the available violence prevention evidence though eight questions. First, the majority of the participants (58 percent) indicated that scientific data on youth violence and its prevention is not used in shaping the thinking and decisions of those involved in prevention. Also, a majority of participants (58 percent) said that reliable scientific information on evidence-based programmes and practices to key leaders and policy makers on the issue was not accessible, and only 21 percent indicated that the information was somewhat accessible. Participants were asked how accessible is good quality scientific information/data on youth violence indicators to key leaders and policy makers in their community and 42 percent indicated that it was not accessible, 39 percent said that the good quality scientific information and data was somewhat accessible, and only 3 percent expressed that the good quality information and data was accessible. Additionally, participants were asked to rate the quality and accessibility of different sources of youth violence data in their community for prevention planning and decision-making on
a scale of 0-10\textsuperscript{4}. According to the participants, information and data coming from NGOs is the most accessible. In general, all the other sources of information/data from police, government, hospitals and universities are hardly accessible or do not meet a level of standards. This is displayed in Figure 3.

*Figure 3. Quality and Accessibility of Data Sources.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative Questions (Shorts Answers 1-8)**

What agencies/programmes/services do you see as potentially providing the immediate “starting point” for enhancing services in youth violence prevention in your community?

El Alto respondents had different beliefs on who should provide the immediate starting point for enhancing services directed to youth violence prevention. Approximately 16 percent of respondents indicated that the families are the entry points in order to work in violence prevention at a community level. They believe that working with families on parenting skills or a school for parents is essential to work in this issue. On the other hand, 15 percent of respondents believe that the municipal government through their Children and Adolescent’s Defender Offices\textsuperscript{5} should be the entry points to work on prevention. The next entry point considered by the respondents from El

\textsuperscript{4} 0=data source doesn’t exist, doesn’t meet any minimal standards, or is not accessible beyond the specific agency; 10=the source of data exists, is accessible, and of use to the community.

\textsuperscript{5} These offices are open to the public and offer permanent and free municipal services for the promotion, protection and psycho-socio-legal defense of the rights of children and adolescents.
Alto were the schools (13 percent) and NGOS or international cooperation offices working in El Alto (11 percent) followed by neighbourhood councils or community centres (10 percent).

Other starting points mentioned in a less degree were community policing, that is, work in collaboration with the police in prevention programmes but mainly to have a police that work closer to the community. Church programmes, the central government as well as the departmental government, school brigades working together with the police, and after school sports programmes also were mentioned. Additionally, some believed that in order to establish a starting point it is necessary to conduct a study in order to identify the areas where most violence occurs and to work on those areas. Also, others indicated that a starting point should be through the offering of job training programmes as well as drug consumption prevention programmes.

**In your opinion, what key pieces of legislation or policies for youth violence prevention in the community still are needed?**

Many of El Alto respondents believe that the most important piece of legislation needed for youth violence prevention is a Youth Violence Prevention Law. However, another group of respondents said that it is important to pass a municipal law that controls alcohol selling and regulates bars, canteens and discos. Also, important for El Alto residents is the addition of more professionals and psychologists in schools in order to work with adolescents and their parents. Similarly, according to the respondents, El Alto also needs a municipal law for drug consumption prevention and in order to control drug selling, mainly inhalants. Other pieces of legislation mentioned by El Alto respondents include sanctions for juvenile offenders, increase budget to implement youth programmes, provide training to community leaders for them to understand how to prevent youth violence, and to provide more infrastructure for youth to spend their free time, an example of this is the construction of cultural centres.

Additionally, respondents believe that there is a need to pass a Youth Municipal Law, reinsertion programmes for youth offenders, a law against child abuse, and an anti-gang law that is currently being promoted by the central government through the Ministry of Government. However, respondents also said that more than laws, there is a need to involve the whole community, social organisations, and civil society to work in prevention and that there are existing laws, but that these just need to be implemented.

**What capacity, resources or institutions are needed to increase the ability to implement and deliver effective youth violence prevention in the community? Please explain.**

The majority of respondents agreed that what is needed in order to increase the ability to implement and deliver effective programmes are *coordinated efforts* among the institutions that work on youth violence prevention. These include social organisations, civil society through neighbourhood
councils and most important the involvement and active participation of the public sector through the local government. Additionally, respondents believe that economic resources are very needed to implement youth prevention in the community, and that it is important to include parents and the media.

**What do you think are some common misconceptions in your community about youth violence?**

Survey respondents agree in that one of the most common misconceptions about youth violence in El Alto is the negative perception that many members of the community have about young people. Respondents mainly indicate that young people are seen as criminals, as robbers or thieves, as antisocial or marauders and that it is most likely that they are involved in drug and alcohol consumption. This implies, as many respondents indicated, that youth are feared and hopeless. Additionally, some also believe that just for the fact that they are young, they belong to a gang. However, some indicate that not all youth are associated to a negative connotation, and also believe that putting juveniles in detention does not bring a solution to the problem.

**What do you think are some practical roadblocks in your community for preventing youth violence?**

A significant number of respondents indicated that the lack of funding and economic resources is one of the major obstacles their community faces when trying to implement youth violence prevention. Also some noted an existent prejudice against young people, as many believe they do not want to change or are not willing to change. Others mentioned that social exclusion is a practical roadblock as well as the lack of political will to work on prevention and to invest in youth. However, some also indicated that an obstacle in the community is the lack of community participation and interest in youth and in preventing youth violence. Another obstacle identified by some respondents was the lack of professionals on the field. Additionally, one respondent mentioned the lack of areas/spaces to address the issue, another mentioned machismo as a roadblock to prevent youth violence, and another one indicated that the community and some authorities ignore the existing laws. Finally, one other respondent mentioned the police and its violent actions against youth as obstacles to preventing youth violence in their community.
Figure 4 illustrates these concerns graphically.

**Figure 4. Practical Roadblocks for Preventing Youth Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of economic resources/budget</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people do not want to...</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social exclusion (parental, economic, labor)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of political will</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no community participation nor...</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professionals on the field</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of space for talks about the issue</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention is not considered important</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machismo</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance of the law</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The police (are violent)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you think the majority of residents in the community you live would suggest as action steps to prevent youth violence?

The majority of the respondents agreed that residents in the community would suggest greater community involvement, for example, workshops and meetings where neighbourhood councils are involved. Others indicated that most likely residents in El Alto will ask for more punitive sanctions, for instance, to put youth delinquents in jail or in reformatories. One respondent indicated that people in their community would ask to build Youth Centres for young people to have a healthy and educational area to spend their free time. One other respondent suggested that the community would ask to hire and work together with an expert on youth violence prevention, as he recognised that there is a lot of misunderstanding on how to prevent youth violence. Finally, a respondent said that the community would ask for family and school teachers to work on inculcating values to the youth.

Do you have any other suggestions for preventing youth violence in your community?

Residents suggested a variety of options; however, the most mentioned suggestion was to engage and work together with the members of the community. Also, some indicated that it is important to establish direct communication with the youth, especially among their parents. In order to increase communication, they suggest community talks, workshops and meetings. Additionally, respondents also said that the city needs Youth Centres for them to have healthy and educational area to spend their free time. Other respondents proposed the implementation of youth violence prevention campaigns in the community.
If you were the head of an organisation or agency and had $20 million dollars to spend on youth violence prevention in your community, what are the top 5 things that you would do with that funding?

One of the main priorities suggested was the implementation of youth participation mechanisms such as Youth Councils, a Youth House and District Youth Brigades. Another high priority action was to build spaces/areas for youth recreation such as soccer fields and parks and to equip the existing spaces/areas targeted for the youth. Also, other top action respondents indicated would fund was the work with professionals and experts on the field of youth violence as well as multidisciplinary teams to address the issue. Another main action mentioned by El Alto respondents was the implementation of parenting schools and programmes that work with families.

Many respondents also indicated the importance to implement Training Centres for youth for them to learn life skills and additional technical skills. One respondent said that in order to incentivise youth to participate in this Training Centres, an education and training voucher could be a good option. Other options of actions mentioned were the implementation of youth programmes, for example to attend youth victims and victimisers, but also programmes on awareness and youth violence prevention. Additionally, respondents indicated that with the funding they would put efforts to work with the community in youth violence prevention through community organisation mechanisms such as a Neighbourhood Councils.

Additionally, respondents mentioned that they would implement community policing programmes. In term of youth employment, respondents mentioned that they would look for agreements (with the private and public sector) for youth to get a job, but in general to promote employability programmes for youth. A few respondents indicated that with the money they would also build a reformatory for juvenile delinquents. Other respondents included as an option the idea of working on improving teaching methods in schools, and the creation of school orientation programmes.

Other priority actions included the implementation of a bar/canteen control law, to conduct social research to reflect and understand the reality of El Alto’s youth, look for networks in order to articulate actions on youth violence prevention, improve the provision of basic services in the city. Also, other actions include the creation and implementation of restorative justice mechanisms and finally, to reward the youth that decide to leave gangs.
Case Study 3: Pilot Study of The YVP-RNS in Santa Cruz De La Sierra – Bolivia

Santa Cruz de la Sierra is Bolivia’s largest and fastest growing city with 1,454,539 inhabitants as of 2012 (INE, 2014). In terms of population, according to the last census data, the city has a large percentage of young people—62 percent inhabitants were 29 years old or younger. Additionally, according to the same data, 89 percent of all the city’s population does not identify with any indigenous group, 4 percent considered themselves Quechuas, 1.83 percent Aymaras and 1.4 percent Chiquitanos (INE, 2014).

Santa Cruz de la Sierra is known for being the economic and industrial centre of Bolivia. As the latest United Nations National Human Report expresses, “the corporate image that emerges gradually [in Santa Cruz de la Sierra] is that of large and modern companies that impose leadership on several levels, particularly in the corporate field” (UNDP, 2016). Its economy is mainly driven by services (32 percent), commerce (30.7 percent), manufacture (11.5 percent) and construction (10 percent) (INE, 2014). As a result, the socioeconomic composition of the city as of 2013 indicates that approximately 12 percent belong to the high SES, 30 percent to the medium SES, 31 percent to the medium vulnerable SES, 19 percent to the low SES (UNDP, 2016), and 8 percent of residents live in poverty (INE, 2014).

In terms of basic services coverage, and according to the 2012 national census, 49 percent of residents do not occupy their own housing units, 94 percent of the city’s population have access to piped water, 99 percent to electric energy, and 55 percent to sanitary services (INE, 2014). In terms of education, 86 percent of residents 6 to 19 years old attend school and 94 percent know how to read and write. Additionally, 39 percent of houses have a computer, but just 23 percent of houses have internet (INE, 2014).

Santa Cruz de la Sierra is known for being one of the most dangerous cities in Bolivia. Different from El Alto, Santa Cruz’s geographic, political and economic conditions make it a geostrategic transnational enclave. Due to its large border area, Santa Cruz is more vulnerable to crimes like border smuggling, arms trafficking and a to be a key route for transporting cocaine and other derivatives from the drug trafficking chain. In 2014, in the lapse of 5 months, between January and May, there have been 12 executions associated with drug trafficking in the city (El Día, 2014).

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6 According to the latest Census, by 2012 Bolivia had 10,027,254 inhabitants.
7 Ajuste de cuentas.
However, Santa Cruz de la Sierra has a relative low homicide rate (7.4/100,000) compared to the national rate (8.3/100,000) according to data from 2013. It also has the highest aggravated robbery rate in Bolivia (72.3/100,000), almost twice the national rate of 43/100,000 (UNDP, 2016).

In terms of perceptions of insecurity, the 2011 victimisation survey from the Citizen Security National Observatory (Observatorio Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana, n.d.) indicates that 56.8 percent of residents believe that crime and insecurity is the major problem that faces the country and 91.3 percent perceive that insecurity has increased in the past 12 months in the city. The same survey showed that 83.1 percent believe that insecurity will increase in the city in the next 12 months and percent86.5 percent indicated that is likely or “very likely” that they will be victims of a crime in the next 12 months. Similar to El Alto, youth violence is associated with gang involvement. According to the Citizen Security National Observatory (Observatorio Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana, 2014), there were about 169 gangs in the city by 2013 with at least 4,165 members. The data from the Observatory also indicates that 93 percent of these gangs are mainly involved in drug use and sales. Through its Municipal Guard, the city has been working in coordination with the police to conduct raids in communities that are most affected by gangs. Additionally, the Child and Adolescent Defender’s Office works protecting the rights of young people and works providing all types of support to victims of violence.

Survey participants. The YVP-RNS was administered to 29 community representatives from Santa Cruz de la Sierra, including leaders (26), residents (2), and practitioners (1). This data was gathered over the course of three months in 2016. In terms of the age of the participants, 34 percent where in the 45-54 age range, 28 percent were 55 years or older, 24 percent in the 35-44 age range and 14 percent in the 25-34 age range. In terms of gender of the respondents, 59 percent were male and 41 percent female. The majority (59 percent) of the participants indicated they did not identify themselves with any ethnic group, 21 percent indicated they identify as Quechuas and the rest to four other ethnic groups. Among the different jobs and positions held by the respondents were school principals, presidents of school boards, and presidents of the city’s neighbourhood councils.

Findings. We present findings to parallel presentation of data in the previous case studies. However, for purposes of space, we do not present and graphs or figures for these data. We also do not review data from the qualitative questions as responses were quite similar to those mentioned in the El Alto case study (see previous case study).

Motivation

(a) Awareness of Problem (Items 1-2)

This sub-scale had two questions. The majority of participants indicated that youth violence is a serious problem in their community. Over 48 percent strongly agreed that youth violence is a
problem in their community. Similarly, 50 percent “strongly agree” that gangs and/or organised youth violence are serious problems in the community.

(b) **Motivation and Will to Address (Items 3-6)**

This sub-scale was composed of four questions. The majority of the respondents agreed in that youth violence is an issue that must be addressed immediately in order for the community to move forward and prosper. Also, a majority of respondents indicated that there is a lot of concern in their community about youth violence and how to prevent it and that youth violence prevention is a high priority for residents in the community. Almost 80 percent of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that youth violence prevention is a top priority of the leaders in the community.

(c) **Beliefs About Preventability of Youth Violence (Items 7-10)**

This sub-scale had 4 items. Over 96 percent of respondents agreed that youth violence can be prevented with the right programmes. Additionally, 62 percent of respondents strongly agreed that people are not born violent, but that they learn violent behaviour. Still, 66 percent agreed or strongly agreed that there are many deep rooted problems in their community, few opportunities for youth, and that there is not much that can be done at the moment to prevent youth violence.

**Drivers of Youth Violence (Items 11-22)**

This question addressed the potential causes of youth violence. Participants indicated that the top driver of youth violence is that youth get involved with gangs or friends who get into trouble, followed by not having parents who are watching over and supervising them, and too much alcohol and/or drug consumption/use. Respondents were also asked if there were any other reasons youth get involved in violence that were not listed above and that they think are true or very true. Among the top additional reasons respondents mentioned were the lack of values in the family, youth coming from dysfunctional families, and emotional neglect from parents. Respondents also mentioned TV’s bad influence and the lack of job opportunities.

**Services (Items 23-32)**

Participants were asked to evaluate the level of knowledge of different prevention programmes in their community. Most people (75 percent) indicated that they knew a few after-school sports and recreation programmes, although 25 percent said they did not know of the existence of these type of programmes. The second type of programme most known by the respondents (60 percent) were programmes for tutoring and helping with schoolwork. Approximately 59 percent of respondents indicated that they knew a few drug and alcohol abuse prevention programmes. On the other hand, a vast majority, 82 percent expressed that did not know any mentoring programme taking place in
their community, and 79 percent of respondents indicated that there are no programmes to prevent joining gangs or to help them get out of gangs in their community.

Respondents were asked to think of the most effective programmes in preventing youth violence in their community and that they believe would be supported by the residents. The top programmes mentioned by respondents were: job training programmes for youth, school support programmes, after school programmes, sports programmes, and drug and alcohol prevention programmes.

**Policies/Plans (Items 33-35)**

Participants were also asked to think about policies, laws, and action plans that they knew about in their community designed to prevent youth violence. Over 65 percent of respondents indicated that there is not a recent Action Plan in place to prevent youth violence in the community. When asked about “tough on crime” policies, 79 percent indicated that there are no such policies in place, 10 percent said that there are actually some of these policies in place. The programmes mentioned among the Action Plans in their communities were programmes for parents in schools, the programmes coming from the Children and Adolescent’s Defender Offices and training programmes provided by the police. The only policy in place that protects young people’s rights that was mentioned by the respondents was the new Child and Adolescent Code.

**Capacity (Items 36-41)**

Participants were asked about their perception of capacity (financing, expertise, resources for youth violence prevention) in their community though six questions. In term of overall funding, the majority of respondents indicated that violence prevention programmes in their community are not funded at all, 38 percent expressed that programmes are not well funded and only 7 percent of respondents said that the programmes in their community are adequately funded. 43 percent said that with the right amount of funds the community would be able to cover all or most of the community with a full set of programmes. However, with the current funding, 29 percent indicated that it is possible to implement small scale pilot programmes or full programme in one area.

Additionally, participants were asked to think on the number of professionals specialising in youth violence prevention in their community and if the number is adequate for large-scale implementation of youth violence prevention programmes. Over 73 percent of them indicated that this number was not adequate at all, and therefore that there is a need for more professionals specialising in youth violence prevention in their community. However, 69 percent of participants expressed that there are some strong NGOS in the community that can implement youth violence prevention programmes although 55 percent indicated that youth violence prevention programmes from public and private agencies in their community are not integrated at all.
When asked how much priority should be given to youth violence prevention, 52 percent of the respondents believed that 51-75 percent of the funding for these programmes should be directed to prevention, and 31 percent believed that this percentage should be between 76-100 percent. This demonstrates that residents from Santa Cruz are aware of the importance of youth violence prevention in their community and therefore, it is a priority for them in terms of funding.

**Evidence (Items 42-49)**

Participants were asked to evaluate the available violence prevention evidence. Half of the respondents indicated that scientific data on youth violence and its prevention is not used at all and 36 percent said that this information was somewhat used to make decisions. Additionally, 43 percent indicated that reliable scientific information on evidence-based programmes and practices is not accessible to key leaders and policy makers, and 36 percent expressed that his information was somewhat accessible.

In terms of youth violence indicators, 37 percent of respondents expressed that this type of information was somewhat accessible to leaders and policymakers in the community, but a large number of participants (30 percent) indicated that they were not aware of this information and the same number of participants (30 percent) said that youth violence indicators were not accessible at all to community leaders and policymakers. In terms of quality and accessibility of data for planning and decision-making, NGOs were rated as most likely to have and share data, and police, government, and hospitals were rated as least likely.

**Summary and Conclusions**

We present data from three separate pilot studies using the Youth Violence Prevention Readiness and Needs Scale (YVP-RNS) in three relatively high violence communities. What is most striking across these three diverse sites in two different countries is the similarity of resident’s readiness and perceived need across the six components of the scale: (1) motivation, (2) drivers, (3) services, (4) policies/plans, (5) capacity, and (6) evidence. In the three cities with high violence rates, motivation to address the problem was high, drivers were seen as multi-faceted including poor parenting, gangs, lack of opportunities, need for recreation and safe spaces, and drug/alcohol use, funding and coordination of services was seen as a major impediment to progress, and very few communities/agencies utilised data for decision making and support of evidence-based programmes.

Still, there were notable differences that have important implications for prevention programme. For example, in Wilmington, Delaware, slightly less than 50 percent of respondents believed problems were deep rooted and difficult to impact, while in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, more than 2/3 or respondents endorsed this answer. In both cases, it seems critical to address
simultaneously the deep-rooted disparities and structural barriers that contribute to youth violence, but in Bolivia it appears to be even more critical as a potential barrier to prevention.

Based on participant feedback across all three sites, respondents felt that this type of measure could be useful for mobilising residents to coalesce around understanding and solving the youth violence problem, and that figures and graphs would be useful tools for community conversations, identifying gaps, and building comprehensive programmes. Across all three communities it is clear that community solutions to youth violence prevention must be comprehensive, involve multiple agencies and actors, be adequately funded, and integrate local data and evidence on effectiveness into planning and practice.
References


__________. (n.d.). *Percepción de inseguridad y evaluación de las instituciones de seguridad ciudadana*. La Paz, Bolivia.


Appendix A

Community Youth Violence Prevention Readiness and Needs Scale (YVP-RNS): Key Informant Interview

Introduction: We want to ask you some questions about youth violence in your community. We are specifically focusing on acts of serious physical violence such as assaults, robberies, and shootings by or against teenagers and young adults. Keep in mind we are focusing on PREVENTION—stopping youth violence before it happens or early on and not CRIME CONTROL or CORRECTIONS, although these solutions may be important as well.

Demographic Information:

a. Gender: Male/Female

b. What is your age range? 19-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55 and above

c. Do you identify with a specific ethnic or cultural group? If so, which one?

_______________________________________________________________________

d. Job title or leadership role

_______________________________________________________________________

e. What is the geographic area you serve in this role (neighbourhoods, city as a whole, other)?

_______________________________________________________________________

f. How long have you worked in this role? _____months ____years

g. How long have you worked in community service in other roles before your current position? ____years
Target Community You Identify/Work with:

Are there specific neighbourhoods in the areas you serve where youth violence is most concentrated? Please list/describe those of most concern.

Motivation

A. Awareness of Youth Violence Problem

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each statement using the scale below. *By your "community" we are referring to the geographic area you work in/serve, as you just identified it.*

1. Youth violence is a serious problem in my community (at least in specific areas).
   
   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. Gangs and/or organised youth violence are serious problems in my community.
   
   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree
B. Priority and Will to Address

3. If my community is to move forward and prosper, youth violence must be addressed.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

4. There is a lot of concern in my community about youth violence and how to prevent it.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

5. Youth violence prevention is a high priority for residents in my community.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

6. Youth violence prevention is a high priority for leaders in my community.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

C. Preventability of Youth Violence

7. Youth violence can be prevented with the right programmes.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

8. There are many things we could do in my community to prevent youth violence.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

9. People are not born violent but LEARN aggressive and violent behaviour.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

10. There are so many deep-rooted problems in my community and few opportunities for youth that there isn't much we can do at the moment to prevent youth violence.

    Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

D. Drivers of Violence

Now, I will read you a list of some of the reasons people say youth are involved in violence. Please rate how true these statements in your community. Youth in my community get involved in violence because they:
11. Don't have parents who are watching over and supervising them.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

12. Don't have jobs or opportunities for good jobs.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

13. Have problems with schoolwork and don't get help.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

14. Get involved with gangs or friends who get into trouble.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

15. Feel hopeless about their future.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

16. Are involved in too much alcohol and/or drug use.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

17. Are involved in selling drugs.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

18. Have nothing to do.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

19. Don't feel connected to or involved in their community.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true

20. Feel unloved and unappreciated.

Not true at all    Sort of true    True    Very true
21. Don’t have enough (or any) positive role models.

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<th>Not true at all</th>
<th>Sort of true</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Very true</th>
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22. Don’t feel good about themselves.

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<th>Not true at all</th>
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*Are there any other reasons youth get involved in violence that were not listed that you think are true or very true? [IF YES] Please tell me what they are:*

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

*Now think about all of the different reasons youth get involved in violence. In your opinion, what are the top three most important factors?*

1. _______________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________________________

**Services**

*E. Programme Availability/Needs*

*Now, I will read you a list of different programmes that can be helpful in preventing youth violence. Please rate whether you know about good programmes that youth and families in your community could go to.*

23. Programs for tutoring and help with schoolwork.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>I don’t know any</th>
<th>I know a few programmes</th>
<th>I know a lot of programmes</th>
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<th>I don’t know any</th>
<th>I know a few programmes</th>
<th>I know a lot of programmes</th>
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25. Programmes to prevent joining gangs or to help them get out of gangs.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

26. Parent training programmes to teach parenting skills.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

27. Alcohol and drug abuse prevention programmes.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

28. Job training programmes for youth.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

29. Mentoring programmes to provide role models for youth.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

30. Volunteer and service programmes to increase youth engagement in their communities.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

31. Community policing that focuses on crime prevention.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

32. Programmes to promote secondary school graduation and prevent drop out.
   
   I don’t know any   I know a few programmes   I know a lot of programmes

Are there any other programmes you know of in the community besides those just mentioned? [IF YES] What are they?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Now, think about these different programmes. In your opinion, which of these programmes do you think IS most effective in preventing youth violence in your community AND would be supported by the residents?

First choice: _________________________________________________________________

Second choice: _______________________________________________________________

Third choice: _________________________________________________________________

Policies

F. Policies, Laws, And Action Plans to Prevent Youth Violence

Now please think about policies, laws, and action plans that you know about in your community designed to prevent youth violence.

33. Is there a recent “Action Plan” to prevent youth violence in your community?

   _____NO  _____YES  _____I DON'T KNOW

34. Are policies in place in your community/country that protect young people’s rights?

   _____NO  _____YES  _____I DON'T KNOW

If you answered “yes” please list:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

35. Are policies in place that you would consider “tough on crime” towards young people (such as treating juveniles as adults at a young age, harsh sentences for youth, etc.)

   _____NO  _____YES  _____I DON'T KNOW

If you answered “yes” please list:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Capacity

G. Capacity for Prevention (Funding, Expertise, Integration of Efforts)

Now I would like to ask you about funding and resources for youth violence prevention in your community.

36. How would you describe the current overall funding situation for youth violence prevention programmes in your community?

   Not funded at all  Not well funded  Adequately funded  Well funded  DON'T KNOW

37. What scale of programme implementation would current human and technical resources allow?

   ______ None
   ______ Small scale pilot programmes or full programme in one area
   ______ Covering some of the community with a full set of programmes
   ______ Covering all or most of the community with a full set of programmes
   ______ DON'T KNOW

38. Do you think the number of professionals specialising in youth violence prevention in the community is adequate for large-scale implementation of youth violence prevention programmes?

   Not adequate at all  Barely adequate  Somewhat adequate  Adequate  DON'T KNOW

39. Many youth violence prevention programmes require strong NGOs (non-government organisations) to implement programmes successfully. Would you say that in your community there are strong NGOs that can implement these programmes?

   Not at all  Some NGOs  A fair number of NGOs  A lot of NGOs  DON'T KNOW

40. How well integrated are various youth violence prevention programmes from public and private agencies in your community? That is, do programmes work in tandem in a harmonious fashion or are they competing against each other for limited resources?

   Not integrated  Somewhat integrated  Try to work together  Integrated  DON'T KNOW

41. Some people think that available resources allocated for youth violence prevention and response should be put primarily into youth violence prevention, and others believe such resources should be used primarily for criminal justice systems and violence response instead.
Assuming limited funding for this problem, in general, what percentage of funding from all available sources would you allocate toward prevention in your community?

0-25%  26-50%  51-75%  76-100%

Evidence

H. Scientific Data On Youth Violence

Now think about the available data on youth violence prevalence, risk, and effectiveness of programmes in your community.

42. How much is scientific evidence on youth violence and its prevention used in shaping the thinking and decisions of those involved in youth violence prevention?

Not used  Used somewhat  Used regularly  Used all the time  DON'T KNOW

43. How accessible is reliable scientific information on evidence-based programmes and practices to key leaders and policy makers on that issue?

Not accessible  Somewhat accessible  Accessible  Very accessible  DON'T KNOW

44. How accessible is good quality scientific information/data on youth violence indicators to key leaders and policy makers in your community?

Not accessible  Somewhat accessible  Accessible  Very accessible  DON'T KNOW

Now please rate the quality and accessibility of the following sources of youth violence data in your community for prevention planning and decision-making on a scale of 0-10. (Please mark 0 if that source of data doesn’t exist, does not meet any minimal standards, or is not accessible beyond the specific agency; please mark up to 10 if the source of data exist, is accessible and of use to the community).

45. Police data

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  DON'T KNOW

46. National, state or local government data

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  DON'T KNOW
47. Violence data from universities

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48. Other adverse childhood experiences data from universities

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49. Hospital data

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**Short Answers**

*Now I would like to ask you just a few more questions.*

SA1. What agencies/programmes/services do you see as potentially providing the immediate “entry point” for enhancing services in youth violence prevention in your community (for example, work with schools to teach social skills)?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

SA2. In your opinion, what key pieces of legislation or policies for youth violence prevention in the community still are needed?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

SA3. In your opinion, what capacity, resources or institutions are needed to increase the ability to implement and deliver effective youth violence prevention in the community? Please explain.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
SA4. What do you think are some common misconceptions in your community about youth violence?


SA5. What do you think are some **practical roadblocks** in your community for preventing youth violence?


SA6. What do you think the majority of residents in the community you serve would suggest as action steps to prevent youth violence?


SA7. Do you have any other suggestions for preventing youth violence in your community?


SA8. If you were the head of an organisation or agency and had $20 million dollars to spend on youth violence prevention in your community, what are the top 5 things that you would do with that funding?


