Position Paper on Urban Violence

SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

Linking human rights, development and violence in the city: contributing to safer cities

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By the Global Alliance

Human rights and development are often perceived as different domains of intervention. Whereas civil and political rights are perceived to relate to the respect and protection of human dignity against violent onslaught (torture, restrictions of political rights, extra-judicial killings, war and conflict), development is often viewed as focusing on the creation of possibilities (labour, sanitation, industry, agriculture). In recent years, the concept of rights-based approaches to development has gone some way towards combining development and human rights. In practical work on the ground, it has also been all but impossible to distinguish between them, as the cases below illustrate. However, the linking of human rights and development has not been far-reaching and strategic enough. Human rights workers overwhelmingly perceive issues regarding livelihoods and social development as externalities, while

development agencies overwhelmingly see violence and conflict as outcomes of poverty and resource scarcity. When for instance xenophobic attacks broke out in South Africa in 2008, human rights organizations worked to promote the rights of refugees and migrants and embarked on teaching the South African population about human rights

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without reflecting on the development agendas in South Africa animated by a sense that marginalization had been reproduced in the post-apartheid era. Against such divisions, this paper argues that development and human rights issues need to be thought about and acted upon in unison. While there

is a need to rethink the link between development and human rights generally, many of the issues and conflicts are particularly acute in the city – the xenophobic attacks being but one example. To be sure, this is not a new agenda, especially in practical work on the ground. Rather, in this paper, we will continue to unpack the relationship between human rights, development and violence to move towards a focus on social justice in the city. We need to start in the city because it constitutes the context in which any idea of separating development from human rights will inevitably fail.

Cities constitute a different social setting than the rural areas that have been the target of much development assistance in the past. While it is true that poverty used to be concentrated and equally true that most people survived on agricultural production in the rural areas, these truisms no longer suffice. In fact, they stand in our way of transforming development aid to meet the challenges of the future in the form of inequality, vulnerability, poverty, conflict and migration. The facts are as follows:
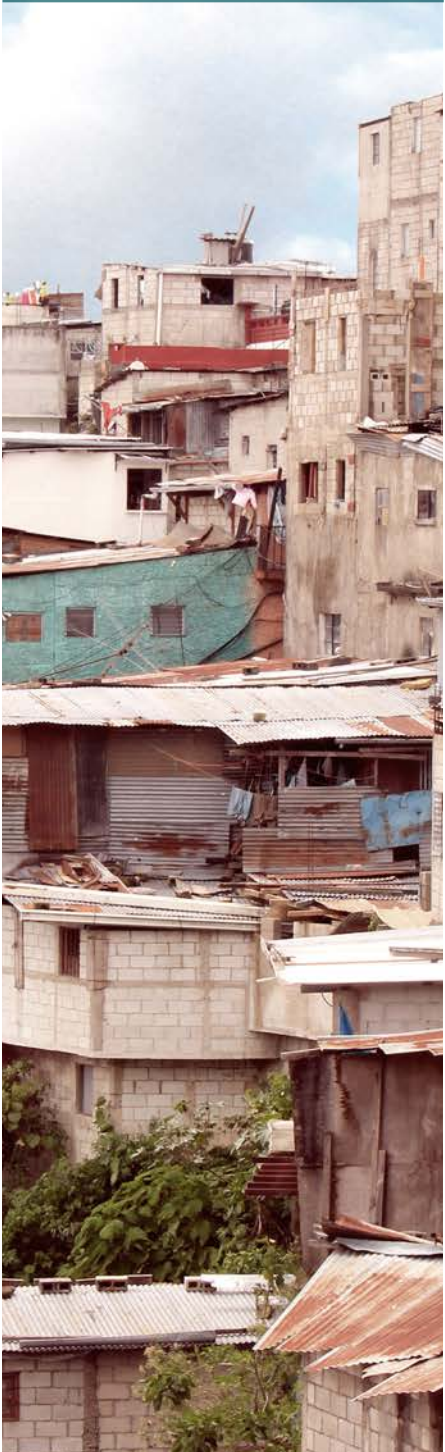
Cities as the human future

1) Today half the global population lives in cities. In a few years, this number will have increased to 60%. Around 881 million urban dwellers languish in abject poverty in developing countries.[1]

2) Violence is a daily occurrence and risk for slum dwellers with mortality rates exceeding 100 per 100.000 in many cities and neighbourhoods. Presently, Caracas leads the way but cities in Africa, the Middle East and Asia are not far behind. This is excluding the murderous urban realities of war-torn countries. Apart from the insecurities and anxieties, violence also seriously hampers development efforts.

3) The slum has become the ordinary frame around children's lives. A conservative estimate is that 600 million children will grow up in slum areas in 2030.[2]

4) The majority of the refugees from the many wars as well as migrants and internally displaced by natural disasters and climate change end up in urban centres in their home region. It is estimated that about 60% of all refugees end up in citie as do 80% of all IDPs. In South East Asia millions have left rural homes to settle in cities in ways that have transformed rural areas for good.[3]

5) Urban areas also spread because as the cities grow they encompass still more rural areas. On top of this, there is an increasing urbanization of the countryside due to mining, agro-industry and bureaucratic redefinition of rural areas as urban settings.[4]

6) Even without migration and spatial expansion, cities are growing simply because more people are born than die there. For all the above mentioned reasons, it is no longer possible to imagine – or dream up – a world in which cities are not the future.[5]

1   UN-Habitat (2016). Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures – World Cities Report 2016. In the most recent publication, UNHABITAT World Cities Report, 2016, the number has been adjusted to 881 million people living in slums in the developing world. This is obviously not the same as 1 billion globally, but they don't give a global number anymore. Interestingly, the same report also notes that the number of people living in slums has increased by 28% over the past 14 years (2000-2014), while the percentage of people in urban areas living in slums has decreased from 39% to 30% (for developing countries).

2   UN-Habitat (2016). Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures – World Cities Report 2016; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015), World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision. No official number exists. We have calculated it based on UNHabitat, State of World Cities, 2006. However, with the recent adjustments in the new report, we may need to revise. World Urban Prospects, 2014, estimates that 4 billion people in the developing world will reside in urban areas by 2030. The new UNHABITAT report sets the slum percentage at 30. This means that 1.2 billion people will live in slums by 2030. About 50% are likely to be under 18, which, as far as anyone can ascertain, brings the number of children in slums by 2030 to about 600 million.

3   Urban Institute, "How can we better serve urban refugees?", http://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-can-we-better-serve-urban-refugees

4   United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision

5   United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision

Paradoxes of the city

Cities are characterized by a number of paradoxes that make them different from rural areas – even if there are multiple overlaps. These paradoxes are suggestive of both the sufferings of the city and its enormous attraction and potential. While it is impossible – many have tried – to define the nature of the city in, for and of itself, scholars and commentators agree on the paradoxes or tensions that characterize life in the city:

- Interdependence and isolation: While everything is connected city dwellers often live lives as though they are apart. Interconnectivity and segregation co-exist in often contradictory ways.

- Cities as battlefield and as prize: Struggles exist in the city for resources, but the city is often the prize itself. Claims in the city co-exist with claims for the city.

- Freedom versus insecurity, liberty versus constraints: While the city offers new entitlements and a rupture from rural power structures, it is also marred by physical barriers, illegality and insecurity.

- Proximity of wealth and poverty: While cities are certainly sites of extreme wealth like Sandton in Johannesburg, it is always in the proximity of abject poverty like Alexandra. Proximity of wealth and poverty – possibility and stuckness – often engenders rage and anger on the side of the poor and fear and insecurity on the side of the rich.

- Plurality of authorities: While authorities are omnipresent in the city, none of them manages to hold sway for very long over the entire city. Competition over the right to exercise authority is fierce. At the same time, few authorities are able to adequately manage the city due to both financial and human resource constraints.

- Between neighbourhoods and the city: While all residents feel that the neighborhood is where they live and where change starts, sustainable change in urban spaces is a city-wide process.

Forms of violence in urban life

The paradoxes just identified always carry the danger of violence. Taking our point of departure in social science research on violence as productive of social relationships, violence is seldom caused by pathology or pure malice; rather, it is useful to explore violence in three dimensions, which sometimes exist alone and sometimes together: affective, instrumental and structural.

- Affective violence: Violence often emanates from frustration and fear, among both rich and poor. Much violence is premised on built-up anxieties. This might be interpersonal violence in families or on societal level. The rich and the privileged fear for their lives and want to protect them; the poor feel an ever-present threat of stuckness.

- Instrumental/ performative violence: Violence can be instrumental in achieving specific goals of security (often the state) and change (often the disenfranchised) or performative, aimed at specific audiences. Gang violence is often both instrumental and performative, as is the violence of the state as it displays its power for the citizenry.

- Structural violence: Finally, violence can take the form of sedimented structures of oppression, what some observers refer to as structural violence. These historical structures of privilege and deprivation tend to reproduce across time, as the examples of apartheid, slavery and colonialism illustrate.

These issues are not unique to urban areas. However, they often take on radicalized forms in the city, as the struggles intensify in a pluralistic, highly unequal environment in which privilege and deprivation exist in close proximity.

Towards a safe city for all

Human rights and development interventions have increasingly been viewed together, not least through the concept of rights-based development where initiatives target people as rights holders and states as duty bearers. While this shift has been welcome, it has not been radical enough. Human rights have been used as a tool for progressive development initiatives but their focus on addressing violence and conflict, especially from authorities, has been ignored

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in development thinking. Likewise, development issues have been seen as peripheral to the protection of people's lives and bodies inherent in much convention-based human rights work. We strive to develop an approach where violence and conflict management are seen as intimately related to development processes of poverty alleviation and improved service delivery in health and education. In this approach safety is a central focus. It comprises:

a) Economic safety – the knowledge that we can all eat tomorrow and send our children to school;

b) Identitary safety – the knowledge that our community and modes of belonging will not be compromised;

c) Spatial safety – the knowledge that we have security of tenure and that structures of power will not arbitrarily reduce our possibilities;

d) Safety against external shocks – the knowledge that if catastrophe hits, we have the resilience to withstand it;

e) Political safety – the knowledge that we can speak our minds and act in individual and collective interests;

f) Institutional safety – the knowledge that there are transparent institutions to rely on, even if we are in conflicts with strong authorities;

g) Bodily safety – the knowledge that there are health facilities available;

h) Access to safety – the knowledge that we have access to rule-bound, uncorrupt protection and security; and

i) Safety of the future – the knowledge that there is a future for us and that we might have a reasonable degree of control over it.

None of these forms of safety are either developmental or human rights issues. While they exist to varying degrees everywhere, they are radically challenged in the city. Large segments of the urban population are born, grow up and die in the same city with few opportunities to improve their lives or influence the environment they live in. This perpetuates political uncertainty, which has both local and global repercussions. This is as true for countries with weak institutions that lack the capacity to provide safety in urban contexts as it is for countries with strong but illegitimate institutions that suppress their populations with torture and violence. An influx of migrants and refugees increases pressure on institutions and services and tensions between newcomers and residents. But there are also enormous potentials in the growing cities, both for those who live in the city and for organizations committed to linking development and human rights in urban contexts through a rights-based approach to urban safety.

Rights-based approach to safer cities

What does a rights-based approach entail?

First of all, we need to target the entire city rather than individual and disparate groups. For instance, research in Nairobi and Johannesburg suggests that there are dangers in targeting only refugees, or any group at the expense of other, often equally poor residents. Interventions must be territorial rather than sectoral or, at the very least, be mindful of the consequences of sectoral interventions in intimate urban spaces, even if targeted interventions are easier to monitor and document. Secondly, there is a need to focus on at least two tracks – rights in the city and rights to the city.

To promote rights in the city, interventions should on the one hand empower local governments and authorities to manage the mounting pressure on facilities, urban spaces and institutions,

while on the other hand the poor and the disenfranchised should be given the means to demand resources as well as be supported in indigenous strategies of survival and safety.

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Promoting rights to the city entails developing what some NGOs and commentators refer to as urban citizenship – whether for newly arrived refugees, for the not-so-new or for the autochthones – both against what we may call denial of the city as slumdwellers are relocated, migrants marginalized and the poor disenfran-

chised and against reducing participation to patron-client networks of political strongmen and entrepreneurs claiming to represent the people. Participation, transparency and accountability are central elements in any endeavor to support citizens' attempts to influence the development, planning and future of their city.

By linking human rights and development to make safer cities for all, we contribute by developing locally embedded solutions to global challenges and towards an agenda for social justice that is implicit in the Sustainable Development Goals in relation to climate change, unemployment, poverty and inequality, as well as conflict and migration. The city is truly the future, but only if it is with justice for all will it be a future worth having.

Case studies

Linking human rights, development and violence in the city in South Africa, Denmark, the Philippines and Liberia

So how does the relationship between violence, human rights and development play itself out in concrete urban settings? Let us go to the streets of Johannesburg, Copenhagen, Manila and Monrovia. The stories all emerge out of our work in urban neighbourhoods and they illustrate that the blind spots within the worlds of development and human rights do not emanate from these neighbourhoods but from human rights and development agencies. The cases are not similar or even at the same level but should be seen as different instances where the linkages are visible or can be made explicit. Each should constitute an eye-opener for those claiming to work in the city.

South Africa

Xenophobia between development and human rights

When xenophobic attacks erupted in South Africa in 2008, it was a shock to many human rights activists, who saw the attacks as instances of barbarism and ignorance. Consequently, human rights organizations, CSVR among them, sent people into communities and participated in public debates to promote rights of refugees, strengthen legal mechanisms of protection and train state institutions in handling refugees. While this was surely important, the actions missed the point about development and what many South Africans in the townships saw as broken promises and hence intimately tied up with past forms of oppression perpetuated into the present and possibly even the future.

The development agenda of South Africa stresses the importance of involving local communities through community structures (civil society,

ward committees and community based organizations) and social development has often happened through government investments and social grants. This has rightly promoted ownership in line with a

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rights-based approach to development. While this is progressive it has also produced a context conducive to political clientilism and political entrepreneurship. In many ways, it was these political entrepreneurs and strong, local groupings that carried out and crucially legitimized the xenophobic attacks. It was when these powerful local stakeholders endorsed the violence against migrants that it became deadly.

However, the xenophobic attacks were not only the result of post-apartheid development policies; they were also produced by other changes in South African society over the past 30 years. We can identify two processes: 1) the informalization of migrant labour and 2) the development of a post-apartheid South African democracy.

From 1985 to 1995, the South African mining industry shed 500.000 jobs, a large proportion of which had been held by migrant workers from throughout southern Africa who had been part of a century-old, massive and extensive labour migration system. In 1994 South Africa's new post-apartheid government dissolved the internal borders of its former homelands and in some ways hardened the external borders in a drive to promote a nationalist agenda for South Africa. These two

processes fundamentally transformed how southern African migrants entered South Africa. From the relatively formalized migrant labour systems made up of recruitment offices, contracts and hostels, migrants became increasingly informalized and had to fend for themselves outside the formal labour system.

Townships and what were then labeled homelands were characterized by acute forms of economic marginalization and underservicing, including lack of infrastructure. This nurtured the development of separate economic structures including an extensive, illicit and self-regulated taxi industry and numerous small general dealers or 'spaza' shops in the communities that catered for the everyday needs of people. Both sectors were enabled by the marginalization. Since the fall of apartheid, the South African government has worked hard to formalize and regulate the taxi industry. This has limited the number of conflicts but also

transformed the taxi industry. This is also true for South African retail structures. They were concentrated in cities and white suburban areas before, but today few rural areas and townships are without a mall. This has transformed the retail sector, and the only spaza owners who have been able to continue working in the increasingly stressed profit margins have been migrant traders, who often cooperate in networks and have few dependents. These are the people, largely, who were targeted in the xenophobic attacks.

In this light, the xenophobic attacks are clearly not only human rights or development issues. The violence was produced at the intersection of human rights, post-apartheid development policies, changes in the urban retail industry and forms of historical oppression and structural violence. Only by making such complex linkages our point of departure can we work for social justice for all.

Denmark

The use of force in the name of equality

In Gellerupparken, the largest housing estate in Denmark, a case is building against Hassan and his family to remove two sons due to parental incapacity to care for them. Hassan is no stranger to having his children removed or imprisoned, as three have already been lost. In the months that pass, Hassan fights with all he has to preempt the intense surveillance he and his family are the objects of, and which he is also expected to play a part in (through watching his sons and enforcing the state-sanctioned constraints on their movements and networks). He is also under threat of eviction for not dealing with the criminal behaviour of his sons and of losing his welfare benefits if he does not comply. His attempts to keep his family together are often seen as counter-productive by welfare workers and hence only contribute to his and

his family's vulnerability because the same workers interpret his practices as unwillingness to cooperate.

Hassan fled from the wars in Lebanon in the mid-1980s. While the family is

'I never dreamed that it would be this difficult to keep the family together in Denmark'

happy for the sanctuary they found, the stay in Denmark has introduced new anxieties. Another Palestinian mother noted, 'I never dreamed that it would be this difficult to keep the family together in Denmark'. Thus the residence in Denmark has turned in another round of attacks on the family's ability to live and stay together, as children are removed, institutionalized and incarcerated by the state, which is consequently not seen as the benevolent entity that

most (ethnic) Danes see. While it is a state that helps, it is also a state that removes children.

From this case we note once again the co-existence of human rights, development and violence in the city. While many human rights advocates point to the rights of refugees, these issues cannot be divorced from the establishment of an almost omnipotent welfare state vested with the powers to intervene in the most intimate spheres of life – ethnically Danish or not. To understand the responses of the two parties – the family and the Danish state officials – one must first understand not only how the war the former comes from has affected them and the historical processes that structure the latter's right to protect and care, but also the urban space of the estate that constitutes the context for the interaction.

Two issues are worth explicating:

1) In Denmark, to be equal is often thought about as a question of sameness – indeed, the word for sameness and equality is the same, lighed.

2) The Danish and the Scandinavian welfare state has always been allowed extensive powers to intervene in the lives of people in trouble, or somehow not lighed, often with awesome omnipotence and force.

These two structural issues impact on how the Danish welfare state engages with the social and ethnic margins (often but not always the same). It is in these contexts that we find the need to discuss the relationship between urban forms of inclusion and exclusion, human rights and development.

Philippines

Poverty, broken families and children in conflict with the law

Manila is a fast-growing, intense metropolis where the poor, and especially the children of the poor, are made to fend for themselves in fierce competition for resources. While the ideology of family is strong, families are also under enormous pressure. Many families manage despite these pressures, but children are often at the losing end. Children face enormous challenges of poverty, including being subjected to brutal forms of policing and disciplining while they labour to survive. While there are protective measures put in place, not least emanating from The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children, their effects are often limited and sometimes counter-productive.

Michael is a 14-year-old boy from an urban poor community in one of the cities in Metro Manila. Two years ago, he was taken to the city's government-managed Children in Conflict with the Law Rehabilitation Center in the Philippines by a police patrol looking for suspects of petty crimes in an area where Michael had found sanctuary for the night. In line with the 2006 Juvenile Justice and Welfare act, Michael could not be put in jail along with adults. He was subsequently taken to the youth center where he was assaulted by his peers and badly treated by the guardian. While shocking, the violence was not new to Michael, as violence has always been a part of his life.

When he was twelve years old Michael ran away from home to escape the violence from his stepfather, who saw Michael as yet another mouth to feed. He lived on the streets, became part of a gang and became involved in petty crime and gang wars. Violence was instilled in him at a very young age at home, and it continued once he was on the streets. Even at the center, where he was supposed to have been safe, violence found him.

The case of Michael mirrors many poor children in blighted urban areas in the Philippines. Violence is intimately connected to intergenerational poverty in families with few skills and development opportunities. This makes for strong links between poverty, disregard for children's social and economic rights, and violence such as child abuse and torture; most of the children who are tortured or ill-treated by the police are street children or children from broken families. Most of the crimes they commit are petty crimes or 'need' crimes such as theft, in other words to cover their basic needs when their families cannot. Capital crimes (e.g. rape and murder) committed by children often happen through peer pressure, when they end up in gangs or are used as drug dealers.

In Michael's case, we see how issues of development, human rights and violence are intimately entangled in poor, urban neighbourhoods. Hence, rather than focusing on one or the other, there is a need to address the problems as one structure and target authorities, families and neighbourhoods with rehabilitative psycho-social interventions, service delivery (for instance job training and education) and legal approaches and avenues to address systemic abuse.

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Liberia

Continuous trauma: war, prison and Ebola

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar world many African countries have faced continuous crisis and war. The promises of a democratic order evaporated as governance structures and former patrimonial networks collapsed and many parts of West Africa descended into war and warlordism. These warlords had no interest in stopping the war, as it enabled them to thrive. As the wars finally ended – and the war in Liberia was longer and deadlier than most – the societies were left broken and poor. Liberia's population had suffered massive dispossession and displacement, and Monrovia had grown rapidly. The wars also left an entire generation of fighting men whose only trade was violence. When Ebola then hit Liberia, as well as Sierra Leone and Guinea, it added new dimensions to already pervasive trauma. As they say in Liberia, 'You can run from the war, but you cannot run from Ebola'. These forms of continuous retraumatization are captured in the narrative of one man trying to survive the war, the prison and the disease.

I used to be a farmer, living with my wife and five children (three boys and two girls) in the interior part of Liberia before the civil war started. During the war, gunmen entered our town, set our house on fire and arrested me along with the children of my two boys and forced us to drink their urine. My wife

was raped, and they were about to take my older daughter away as a sex slave when suddenly, another group of gunmen attacked the town with heavy shooting. During the gun battle between the two groups, members of my family ran for their lives into the nearby bushes. One of my sons got killed in the process.

After weeks of traveling, we reached Monrovia and relocated in one of the camps for internally displaced people. When the war ended, going back home brought back fresh memories of my past traumatic experience. Besides, I could not remember having any property left in my home town including shelter. Therefore, I decided to stay in Monrovia. This decision proved to be a common one as many people were migrating here and a slum area was forming near the city of Monrovia that in the past had been regarded as uninhabitable (not good for people to reside). I bought a piece of land from a group of individuals who claimed to be the pioneers and rightful owners of the land within the slum area. I learnt later that the land that was sold to me had been sold by the same sellers and bought by several persons before me and even after I had bought it. When I started constructing my zinc shack on the land, I had to defend myself through fist fights and other violent attacks almost every month from

different individuals who claimed to be owners of the land.

One day, I got into a serious fight with one of the so-called buyers of the land, during which I almost killed him with a cutlass. I was arrested by the police and later found myself behind iron bars awaiting trial. That trial did not take place until after I had spent over eight years in prison, and eventually I was freed through the annual executive clemency. Back in the community, I discovered that during my years in prison, the community size has increased massively but with no development, not even basic social services.

Besides, my family had become something else. My wife now has multiple boyfriends who frequently meet each other, and sometimes fight in my house. During the Ebola outbreak one of my wife's former boyfriends died of the virus and so my house was quarantined for 21 days. Fortunately, none of my family members came down with the virus. And so we were freed, but the stigma remains. My children stopped attending school years back. My son is now a drug addict and dealer and is riding a commercial motorbike. One of my daughters is now on the street every night engaged in sex work while the other boy is part of one of the armed robbery gangs that terrorize the community at night. Only my last daughter kept herself in school.

This is her last year but she is losing interest because she is older than her classmates. My wife no longer sees me as a husband. I am always angry over the manner in which she has been and still is unfaithful to me. Therefore, I am always in a fight, whether with her, with one of her boyfriends or one of my children—in all, there is no peace in our house. My community is one of the most undeveloped and crime-infested slum communities of Monrovia. The entire community is not comfortable with me and fears my presence. The community members keep threatening me and saying that we don't belong in the city. Unfortunately, due to old age along with my deteriorated health caused by the suffering in prison over the years, I am unable to engage in farming any longer. Besides, my children and wife have resisted all attempts, and are not interested in leaving Monrovia. We feel at risk from our community and they feel at risk from us.

In this narrative, continuous trauma prevails as the protagonist attempts to make a life in the harshest of conditions marked by war, prison and poverty. None of these issues can be reduced to psychological, developmental or human rights issues. They are as entangled as the solutions and interventions must be.

What is the Global Alliance?

The Global Alliance is a strategic alliance between likeminded civil society organizations working towards building a global alliance of communities against torture and urban violence. This we do through country-based as well as collaborative research and knowledge generating projects across partners, focusing on countering authority-based violence in poor, urban neighbourhoods.

The Global Alliance is built on three core principles for partnership; equality, transparency and mutual responsibility. It is also essential to the Global Alliance that the local experience; findings and learnings are linked to the global agenda of addressing prevention as well as the (right to) rehabilitation for victims of torture and violence. These local engagements are the real driver of generating knowledge and evidence based arguments when shaping the global agenda. Apart from undertaking project activities in the four countries of Liberia, South Africa, the Philippines and Denmark, the Global Alliance also carries out:

• Monitoring across the different sites,

• Generate knowledge about different forms of interventions and contexts,

• Complement local advocacy on violence prevention with global initiatives

The Theory of Change

The Theory of Change of the Global Alliance is that if we as partners work systematically with community-led approaches towards the prevention of violence, through dedicated partnerships in different countries, then the Global Alliance will be able to produce knowledge and models to the benefit of target groups (at-risk groups and communities) and for local and global advocacy purposes.

Besides the knowledge generation and advocacy focus of the alliance, the ambition is to lay the foundation for a new approach to local and global partnerships, through constant reflection on internal dynamics (including power differences) as a potential for learning and organizational development as individual partners and as an alliance. This work is driven by the realization; that only by building partnerships from the bottom up, including partners in poor, urban neighbourhoods, can we hope to change the agenda global towards focusing on everyday forms of authority-based violence in poor, urban neighbourhoods.

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

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

Balay Rehabilitation Center, the Philippines;
www.balayph.net

LAPS – Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services, Liberia;
www.lapsliberia.com

DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture, Denmark;
www.dignityinstitute.com

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