Study of the Violent Nature of Crime in South Africa
Creating a violence free society

Presentation by
the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation,
at a press briefing of
the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster
25 August 2008.

Introduction

- Purpose of project - to assist efforts aimed at tackling violence by:

  1. Presenting an overall picture of the nature of violence in South Africa.

  2. Presenting a framework for understanding violence in South Africa and for understanding:

     i. Why levels of violence in South Africa are so high.

     ii. Why such a high proportion of violence is 'social' violence between people who are known to each other.

     iii. Why there is gratuitous violence.

  3. Making recommendations.

Components of project

- **Submitted thus far:**
  1. Concept paper (June 2007);
  2. Circumstances of murder in areas with high rates of murder (June 2008). A study of murder dockets at six police stations with a high rate and number of murders.

  Other deliverables – reports on:
  3. Nature and causes of sexual violence (Will be submitted: September 2008).
  4. The socio-economic factors which contribute to violence (September 2008).
  5. Case studies on perpetrators of violent crime (September/October 08).
  6. Summary report on key findings and recommendations (Nov 08).

Overview of presentation

- Focus: Key findings from the project thus far.
- Focuses on:
  1. Major forms of violence.
  2. Acquaintance violence and stranger violence.
  3. Neglected sub-categories of violence.
  4. Violent crime priorities.
  5. Causes of violent crime.
  6. Measures to address violent crime.

Major forms of violence

- **Forms of violence** – some correspondence with, but distinct from offence categories.

- **Major forms of violence are** (estimate more than 2/3rds of violence):
  1. **Assaults** linked to arguments, anger and domestic violence - linked to offences such as murder, assault GBH, common assault.
  2. **Rape and sexual assault** – link to offences such as murder, rape (child sexual abuse also a key focus of project)
  3. **Robbery and other violent property crime** - linked to offences such as murder, aggravated robbery (vehicle hijacking etc).

- **Focus of project is on these major forms of violence.**

- Examples of **other forms** of violence (less than 1/3 of violence):
  4. Conflict between groups over territory, markets, power (e.g. taxi, gang violence) … includes xenophobic violence??
  5. Vigilantism and excessive force by law enforcement.
  6. Resistance to law enforcement intervention.
  7. Others …..

- **Note: murder is not a 'form' but might be related to any of the above**

Acquaintance violence ('social contact crime')

a. <u>Most</u> assault, rape and child sexual abuse involves people known to each other.

b. National picture – most violence takes this form.

c. Assault GBH linked to acquaintance violence is the primary driver of murder

d. Relationships

    a. Many incidents between spouses, intimate partners or within family.

    b. Much violence - 'intermediate' relationships – known to each other, not related.

e. In addition to violence against women, there are a very large number of male-male assaults. (NIMSS 2000,2001,2003 – 87% of murder victims male) **Male-male assaults are a neglected type of assault.**

f. Alcohol a prominent factor.

g. Murder study indicates that knives/sharp instruments are more significant than guns in acquaintance violence incidents

    a. Overall 54% involved guns, 32% knives/sharp instruments.

    b. But argument related murders: 61% knives/sharp instruments; 26% guns.

Stranger violence

a.   Mainly robbery but burglaries and other property crimes may also be violent or 'potentially violent'.

b.   Many rapes (in Gauteng 35% of reported rapes)

c.   Also some assaults (e.g. road rage assaults)

d.   This is the second major driver of murder rate.

e.   Guns are a major factor in fatal robberies. In murder study 81% of 'robbery type' murders involved firearms.

f.   Stranger violence is more significant in urban and particularly metropolitan areas

   a.   In suburbs it may be the dominant form of serious violence – mainly in form of trio crimes (carjacking, business & residential)

   b.   In township and inner city areas (murder study results):

      a.   Stranger violence and acquaintance violence make a similar contribution to overall rates of murder

      b.   Street robbery is far bigger than trio accounting for the majority of robbery related murders. **Street robbery is also a neglected type of robbery.**

Neglected sub-categories of violence
Male-male assaults & street robbery

- Possible that these two sub-categories account for majority of murders in SA.

- Two voices are very prominent (assisted by media) in shaping national debate about crime priorities

  1. Middle class communities – contribute to priority being given to trio robberies

  2. Organisations opposing violence against women organisations – contribute to priority given to domestic violence and sexual violence

- Neglect of these forms (sub-categories) of violence related to:

  a) Police belief that they cannot address it;

  b) The fact that it primarily impacts on poorer/marginal victims

  c) No advocacy groups motivating for male-male acquaintance violence to be addressed (compared with violence against women and children)

  d) Male-male violence

     o young black men – perceived as source of the problem of violence – not recognised as victim constituency

     o Overlap between victim and perpetrator constituency and roles – sometimes word 'opponents' may be more appropriate than perpetrator/victim.

Violent crime priorities

- **Project suggests a need for a flexible approach to crime priorities e.g.**
  - o **Suburban (metropolitan/city areas)** - trio robberies
  - o **Township and inner city (metropolitan/city areas)** – high street robbery, sexual violence (including acquaintance and stranger) and assault (including male-female and male-male assaults)
  - o **Small town and rural** – sexual violence (including acquaintance and stranger) and assault (including male-female and male-male assaults)
  - o **Farm areas** – assaults (sexual violence?) and robberies ('farm attacks')

The causes of violent crime

- Proliferation of violent crime is supported by environment which is conducive to crime more generally.

- Specific factors which support the proliferation of crime generally **and** violence specifically include:
    1. Ambivalent attitudes regarding crime and the law.
    2. Normalisation of violence related to culture of violence and criminality
    3. Vulnerability of young people linked to inadequate child rearing and youth socialisation.
    4. Broad socio-economic/socio-psychological factors
        a. Links strongly to 'two tier' structure/high level of inequality.
        b. Contribute to undermining self-confidence and self-respect.
        c. Raises issues not only of 'redistribution' but also of 'recognition'.

Causes 2.
The causes of violent crime

- Factors contd

    4. Insecurity, and certain beliefs, about masculinity.

    5. The broad impact of the criminal justice system.

    6. Alcohol and other substance use.

    7. Firearms.

    8. The legacy of war in South Africa and the region and impact of regional instability.

    9. The domestic, regional and global criminal economy.

Measures to address violent crime

1. **Principal recommendations**

   A. Enhancing developmental crime prevention

   B. Contesting the culture of violence;

   C. Strengthening evidence based crime investigation and prosecution.

2. Other recommendations

Enhancing developmental crime prevention

1. Interventions targeted at high risk groups (e.g. families and unmarried/single mothers in low income communities) to help with parenting practices, etc.

2. Child care workers help to increase cognitive and social abilities of under-privileged children;

3. Preparation of disadvantaged children for primary school

4. Developing emotional skills for primary school children.

Contesting the culture of violence

1. Leadership to promote non-violent culture.

2. National programme of action to strengthen non-violence possibly incorporating lessons and symbolism from National Peace Accord.

3. Creating safe spaces – public space, schools, prisons.

4. Work against violence through community based structures.

5. Work against violence in the home.

6. Reducing state violence – supporting professional use of force by police + defence of life policy.

Strengthening evidence based crime investigation and prosecution

1. Strengthening management and supervision of investigations.

2. Support to police and prosecutors regarding:

    1. Good practise in working with witnesses and victims

    2. Suspect interviews and confession evidence.

    3. Physical evidence (finger prints, DNA etc).

Measures to address violent crime

Selected other recommendations

1. Strengthened implementation of Firearms Control Act.

2. Prohibit advertising of alcohol.

3. Macro-economic - addressing inequality

4. General measures which promote people's sense of self respect and feeling that they are valued by society (recognition measures).

5. Measures on level of public values.

6. Engage men through public education on masculinity and sexuality

7. Victim empowerment programmes should also recognise men (and participants in male-male violence) as a victim constituency.

Conclusion

- More flexible approach to crime priorities – single set of national priorities doesn't accommodate variations between areas.
- Room for strengthening responses to violence on various levels
  - Culture of violence and crime
  - Criminal justice & restorative justice
  - Developmental crime prevention
  - Structural –inequality and issues of recognition.
- Short term – criminal justice and culture offer greatest potential.
- Developmental and structural need to be understood as necessary but likely to yield results only in the medium term.

The end

THANK YOU!