SOCIAL COHESION

MISSING LINK TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN POOR AND INEQUITABLE COUNTRIES?

What is social cohesion?

The factors that hold societies and individuals together

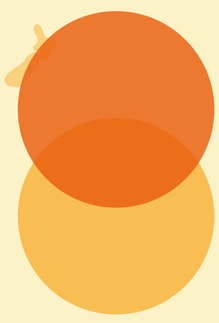
- Do people feel they belong?
- Do people trust each other?
- Do they work together?

A study in SOUTH AFRICA and BRAZIL found that:

- Social cohesion co-exists with violence and can either prevent or increase it.
- Social cohesion takes different forms in the global south and north.
- People living in poor communities are the most vulnerable to all types of violence.
- Interventions by government and non-governmental actors can reduce violence at the same time as undermining social cohesion.

Findings on Social cohesion and violence

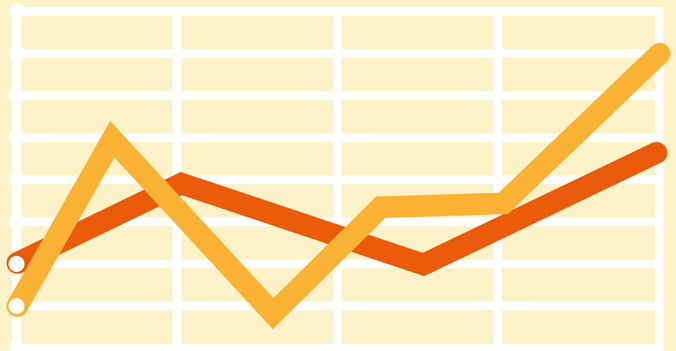
Social cohesion can take VIOLENT and NON-VIOLENT forms.



VIOLENT: vigilante violence

NON-VIOLENT: community meetings (civic co-operation)

Violence, inequality and poverty



- Poverty and a daily experience of inequality is linked to social unrest and violent crime in South Africa.
- In Brazil communities who experienced extreme poverty and low high school education 20 years ago have the highest homicide rates now.

Social cohesion and fear of crime

- Fear of crime does not have a significant impact on interracial trust in South Africa. It has the most impact on confidence in government performance.
- High levels of social cohesion do not reduce fear of crime in Brazil. Social cohesion can increase fear of crime through talk about crime in social networks.

Community level cohesion

- Disadvantaged communities in South Africa and Brazil have close social networks
- People come together to help each other
- People also come together to help each other by committing violence
- People often regulate disputes informally without the state

VIOLENCE PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS

- Violence prevention interventions must address social cohesion or they may have a negative impact.
- Communities need to be involved democratically in interventions.
- Local types of cohesion and community norms should inform interventions.
- Initiatives ought to take into account informal means of social regulation like popular justice.
- More research is required in the global south to understand social cohesion. This will help support violence prevention interventions that reduce violence and build social cohesion.

For more information download the Research Brief or go to www.saferspaces.org.za