Report of the joint assessment mission on youth at risk in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone
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Foreword to the Report of the joint assessment mission on at-risk youth in Sierra Leone

The number one priority of the New Direction government is the development of the human capital of the country. This requires investment in youths as well as other groups in the country.

Sierra Leone is at an interesting point in its history whereby young people aged 15-35 years account for about 33% of the country's population and represent about 63% of the economically active population, 67% of which are unemployed.

In his address to parliament in 2019, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio noted, inter alia, that this government will continue to view youth unemployment in particular and youth welfare in general as both a human capital development and a security challenge and will therefore adopt holistic, integrated and coherent approaches to create jobs, inspire youths and motivate them to actively participate in youth empowerment interventions currently being rolled out by the government. It is for this reason that the conduct of the Youth-at-Risk Assessment could not have been timelier.

On behalf of His Excellency and the government of Sierra Leone, I want to register our sincere appreciation to staff of United Nations, the Office of National Security and of course Ministry of Youth Affairs, for travelling the length and breadth of the country to experience firsthand the involvement of our young people in cliques and gangs.

I can't help appreciating the fully consultative and integrated manner in which the Government of Sierra Leone, the UN Country Team and relevant UN entities at their Headquarters, such as the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI)

within the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Crisis Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cooperated to make the preparation of this report a reality.

It was really heart-warming to note that thirty-six per cent of the survey respondents were women, thus ensuring adequate representation of gender perspectives.

There is no denying, that the main reasons that push at-risk youth across all communities to join gangs and cliques are the very reasons that keep this government on its toes namely youth unemployment, urban and rural poverty, injustice, provision of basic services and human rights to name a few. That said, "poverty is as old as society itself" and there has been poverty in Sierra Leone for a long time, the phenomenon of widespread gang activity however is more recent. The report also highlights that in fact some members of gangs come from middle-class families, all this indicating a more complex relationship between gang membership and socio-economic causes.

It is disheartening that drug abuse has taken a new dimension, especially when the report notes that participation in gangs and cliques is reported to be usually associated with drug abuse, with opiate addiction, particularly involving Tramadol and (now 'Cush' and 'Boiled Pampers water') been identified as a key risk factor that contributes to the recruitment of youth into cliques and gangs. The over affordability of alcohol to the extent that it's cheaper than the cheapest meal, is also concerning.

I can't agree more with the assertion that – the police force, the prison system and the justice system – are the most critical institutions engaged in curbing the spread of gang activity in the country. There is there definitely need to review the legal framework, equipment needs and specific training particularly to the police force for them to adequately address gang activity across communities. At the same time, it is noteworthy that often there is too much emphasis on rights and not on responsibilities of clique and gang members when the police and court system get to work.

I cannot end this piece without touching on the role of the family in preventing membership in cliques and gangs. Like the report rightly notes, a root cause for young people joining and engaging with gangs as identified across focus groups is the role of the family. Focus groups have stated that many of the gang members come from single parent households, are orphans or semi-orphans and often lack both parental guidance and a social support net to stop them from joining gangs. While this is definitely a push factor, it does have to always have to be that way. Some people still manage to go through dysfunctional families without being sucked into cliques and gangs.

With the soon-to-be-launched chiefdom youth farms and rural electrification programs government hopes to curb the increasing urbanization of young people to our cities and big towns. In a similar vein, the lack of vocational and educational programmes will soon be a thing of the past with the roll out of TVET centres in all districts in the country.

The use of UNICEF's U-Report online tools, as a means to reach out a wider audience and compare data also speaks to our commitment as a government to embrace technology and go fully digital in the foreseeable future.

This assessment report will immensely help government and its development partners to better understand the patterns of recruitment and mobilization of young people into cliques and gangs in rural and urban areas and estimation of the phenomenon, it will also be invaluable when designing interventions to mitigate the involvement of youth in cliques and gangs as well as interventions that seek to help youths to become productive forces in their communities and contributing to the long-term development goal of the country.

Hon. Mohamed Orman Bangura
Minister of Youth Affairs

Overview of the assessment mission

Context and rationale

At the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone embarked on the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, including child soldiers, which was declared complete in February 2004. Over this period, The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and its partners disarmed more than 75,000 combatants from the main warring factions and almost 55,000 ex-fighters received reintegration benefits.[1]

Sierra Leone held four peaceful elections after the end of the civil war, in 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2018. The Security Council, in 2014, welcomed the strong progress Sierra Leone had made in the state building and national peacebuilding processes, while remarking that "important work remained to further embed peace and to secure equitable prosperity for the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans."[2] In 2014, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) was withdrawn and its responsibilities were transferred to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT).[3]

In March 2018, Sierra Leone held its first post-war presidential election without the support of a United Nations mission and, on 4 April 2018, Brig. Gen. (Rtd.) Julius Maada Bio of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was sworn in as the new President. Parliamentary and local council elections were also held in March 2018. Since its installation, the Government has focused, inter alia, on the fight against corruption and the promotion of free quality school education.

On 1 March 2019, the Government of Sierra Leone adopted a five-year National Development Plan (2019–2023) with a focus, inter alia, on human capital development,

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[1] UNAMSIL official documents.
[2] Full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2014/6, Security Council Meetings Coverage, SC/11337, 66/2/2014, available at <www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11337.doc.htm>.
[3]   Security   Council   Meetings   Coverage,   SC/11337,   66/2/2014,   available   at <www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11337.doc.htm>.

including youth employment. The plan highlights that Sierra Leone's population is relatively young and has a high unemployment rate.[4] The lack of socio-economic opportunities results in the migration of youth from rural to urban areas and from urban areas to other countries.

While the youth represent a significant productive force for the country, limited access to technical education and/or vocational training continues to prevent them from acquiring marketable skills. The increased presence of idle and disgruntled youth in Freetown and other urban centers, organized in so-called 'cliques and gangs', has become a source of insecurity for communities. The involvement of gangs (frequently under the influence of drugs) in violent crimes, using bladed and other offensive weapons, has become an increased reason for concern that has prompted the Office of National Security (ONS) to consider cliques and gangs as a national security threat.

Against this background, the Minister of Youth Affairs has requested the support of the UN to undertake a joint assessment of the specific situation of youth recruited into cliques and gangs and an analysis of elements that could prevent youth engagement in violence and other forms of negative coping mechanisms.

Objectives and content of the joint assessment mission

The overarching objective of the joint assessment mission was to develop a broadly shared understanding of the following key issues:

(a)   Patterns of recruitment and mobilization of young people into cliques and gangs in rural and urban areas and estimation of the phenomenon;

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[4] According to the 2015 census, 74.8 per cent of the population is below the age of 35. The prevailing discourse considers the youth bulge as a source of social instability rather than an accelerator of growth.

(b)   Recommendations for key elements that could mitigate the involvement of youth in cliques and gangs and, instead, become a productive force in their communities, contributing to the long-term development goal of the country.

Methodology

The joint assessment mission was conducted in a fully consultative and integrated manner with the Government of Sierra Leone, the UNCT and relevant UN entities at Headquarters, such as the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI) within the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Crisis Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The assessment was led by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, in collaboration with the ONS, Youth Commission and Districts Youth Councils, and drew on elements from the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023. Geographical areas for the assessments were identified by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and ONS and included Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Kono.

While on mission, the team met with the Honourable Vice-President, relevant Government ministries, ONS, Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Correction Services, personnel of the Mental Health Hospital, the District Security Council Committees (DISEC), the Human Rights Commission, District Youth Councils, Motorbike Riders Associations, market vendors associations, youth groups and relevant national stakeholders, including leaders and members of cliques and gangs and community members. The agenda of the mission is attached (Annex 1).

The mission was led by the Deputy Minister of Youth Affairs, and included the ONS Director of Planning and Intelligence, personnel of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Commission of Youth, UN staff members of DPO/OROLSI, DDR Section in New York (OROLSI/DDRS), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), UNDP Regional Office in Kenya, Peace and Development Advisor from

the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Sierra Leone, and staff of UN Agencies in Freetown (FAO, WHO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women).

OROLSI/DDRS led the design, revision and training on data collection tools, including perception surveys and data analysis. To guarantee effective data collection, 232 in-person surveys were conducted in all five locations with the support of the District Youth Councils. Thirty-six per cent of the survey respondents were women, thus ensuring adequate representation of gender perspectives. The information was complemented and contrasted with focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Sample questions were also disseminated through the UNICEF's U-Report![5] online tools, as a means to reach out a wider audience and compare data. Through this method, 7,886 respondents (74 per cent boys and 26 per cent girls) were contacted. Data from the survey can be found at the following link: https://sierraleone.ureport.in/v2/opinion/3592/

An important limitation of the data collection exercise was the difficulty in establishing a relationship of trust with the youth interviewed, due to the limited timeframe of the exercise. Another important limitation was the language barrier, as the questions were written in English and enumerators had to interpret them in Krio for the interviewees. Members of the District Youth Councils tried to overcome these obstacles by dedicating enough time to explaining the scope of the exercise and questions to the interlocutors. The data from the survey has been triangulated with the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews as well as data from desk research and U-Report!

While the data collected does not pretend to be exhaustive of the reality of youth at risk, it offers an overview of different areas that require further analysis. Initial recommendations have been included in this report.

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[5] UReport! is a social platform created by UNICEF, available via SMS, where young people express their opinions on issues concerning their communities and become positive agents of change.

Situational analysis: Ongoing trends – urban and rural violence

Risk factors, modalities of recruitment and rationale for joining

According to Sierra Leone's National Youth Service Strategy and Roadmap for Implementation (2017) youth represent the majority of the working-age population; however, they make up a proportionately smaller part of the labour market. As such, youth suffer more from both under-employment and unemployment. According to the Sierra Leone Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate is higher among youth than among older people (defined as people aged 36–64) at 5.9 per cent versus 2.2 per cent respectively. The highest unemployment rate occurs among young men, particularly in Freetown (14.0 per cent).

Risk factors

Unemployment and poverty

The context of high unemployment and pervasive poverty across the country constitutes the largest underlying cause for the recruitment of at-risk youth into gangs and cliques, as depicted in the word cloud in Figure 1. Given the lack of economic opportunities, an association with groups is often times perceived as a source of income, even for individuals with advanced education. For instance, membership to a specific group is deemed as a source of protection. According to the results of the survey and focus group discussions, factors such as peer pressure, corruption and the perception of prestige represent other key motives for joining a gang (*Figure 10*).

Figure 1: Main reasons that at-risk youth across all communities join gangs and cliques

Drug abuse

Participation in gangs and cliques is reported to be usually associated with drug abuse (*Figure 2*). Across all assessed towns, opiate addiction, particularly involving Tramadol, has been identified as a key risk factor that contributes to the recruitment of youth into cliques and gangs. Moreover, according to several sources, substance addiction, including alcohol, has been exploited by unscrupulous politicians to provoke youth into creating chaos and violence during electoral periods.
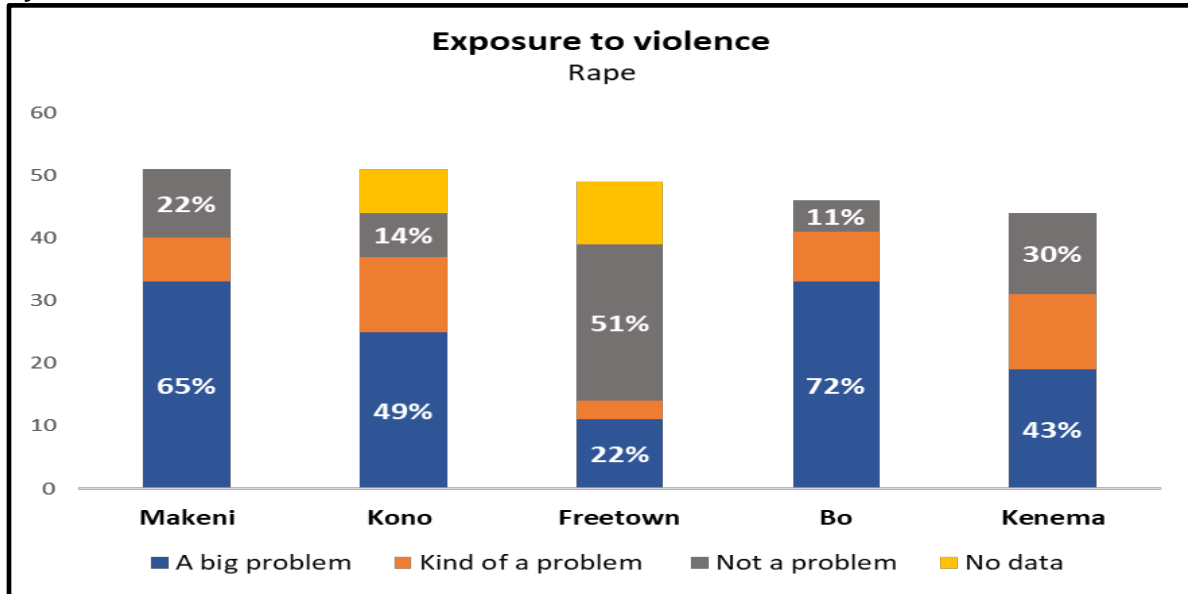
Figure 2: Exposure to violence: prevalence of drug addiction in the communities as perceived by interviewees

Exposure to violence
Drug addiction
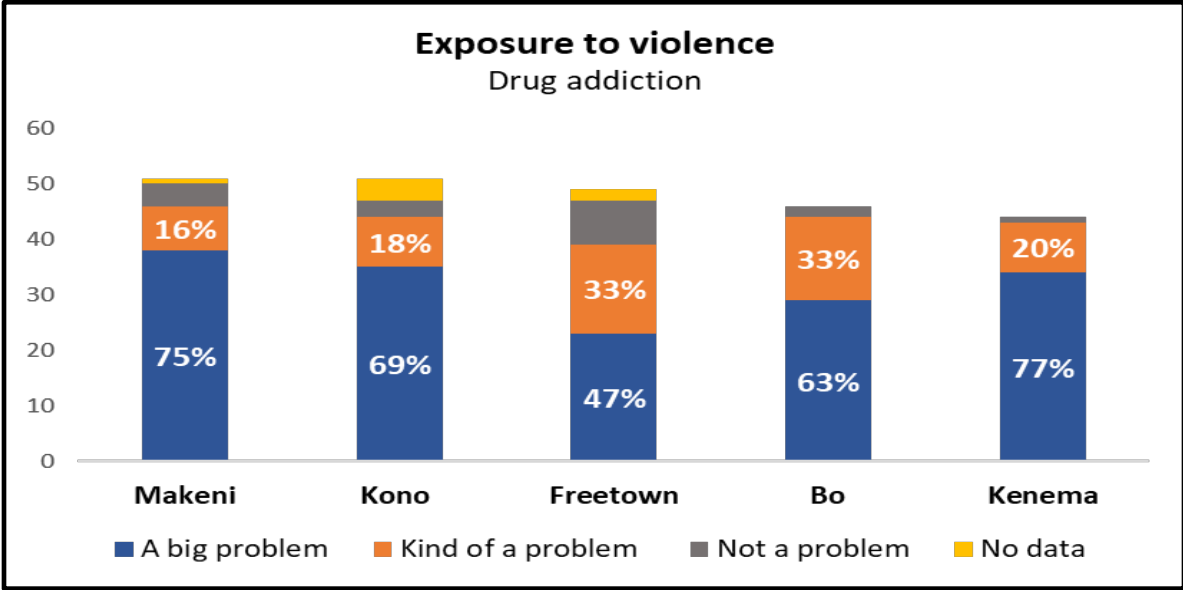
Increasing urbanization

From the focus group discussion, it has emerged that increasing urbanization further contributes to the marginalization and sense of frustration among at-risk youth. As individuals migrate from rural areas to urban centres without clear economic prospects, their vulnerability increases and creates conditions for their recruitment into gangs and cliques. It has also been reported that minors are sent by their family to urban areas to be cared for by relatives or other family members who usually are not prepared to provide for these children or do not have the capacity to do so. The children are therefore exposed to labour exploitation and, sometime, also sexual abuse. Even for those children who enroll at school, the absence of adequate guidance and counselling within the home exacerbates the lack of a protective environment. Combined, these issues disproportionally affect girls, who are often targets of sexual violence and rape. In fact, except in Freetown, the majority of respondents has indicated that rape constituted a "big problem" in their respective communities (*Figure 3*).

Figure 3: Exposure to violence: prevalence of rape in the communities as perceived by interviewees

Exposure to violence
Rape

Location	A big problem	Kind of a problem	Not a problem	No data
Makeni	65%		22%	
Kono	49%		14%	
Freetown	22%		51%	
Bo	72%		11%	
Kenema	43%		30%	

Legacy of war

Based on the focus group discussions, the surge of gangs and cliques is also considered a *legacy of war*.[6] While priority was given towards disarming and demobilizing members of armed groups, their reintegration was limited in scope due to the short time frame of the reintegration component of the DDR programme. Moreover, individuals recruited as child soldiers did not receive the necessary psychosocial, educational and skill training support, which would have ensured their complete successful transition into civilian life. Under these conditions, the focus groups pointed out, that some of the former child soldiers ultimately resorted to crime in order to survive. Some ex-combatants became motorbike riders, while, in some cases, also conducting illegal activities such as smoking drugs and engaging in petty crimes. From the discussion with the motorbike riders' associations, it has also emerged that motorbike riders come from different groups with diverse background and also include former personnel of the security forces, youth associated with cliques and gangs, youth who earn their livelihood in the transport sector as well as unemployed youth who share the use of the

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[6] Focus group discussion, Freetown.

same motorbike and get pulled into this activity. Representatives of the motorbike riders' associations acknowledged that the makeup of their organizations is complex and articulates different realities.[7] They also made very specific suggestions that could help to improve the situation of motorbike riders, which have included in the recommendations of this report.

Lack of vocational and educational programmes

The insufficient number of vocational and educational programmes which cater to youth represents another risk factor. While the Government has promoted formal educational, additional efforts have been suggested by all individuals interviewed to expand the informal and technical education services to reach a wider number of people. At the same time, it has been acknowledged during all interviews and focus group discussions that no intervention can be fully successful in the absence of sustained family support.

Seeking protection from violence

The constant exposure to violence, particularly physical threats and sexual abuse, also contribute to the surge of gangs and cliques. Under this scenario, gang members are able to project and enforce their power over the community, thus effectively exerting pressure for the recruitment of new members.[8] While the frequency of criminal acts varies among communities, almost 50 per cent of the respondents indicated having been victims of gang violence (*Figures 4 and 5*).

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who have been victims of gang violence at least once.

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[7] Focus group discussion with Motorbike Riders' Associations, Freetown.
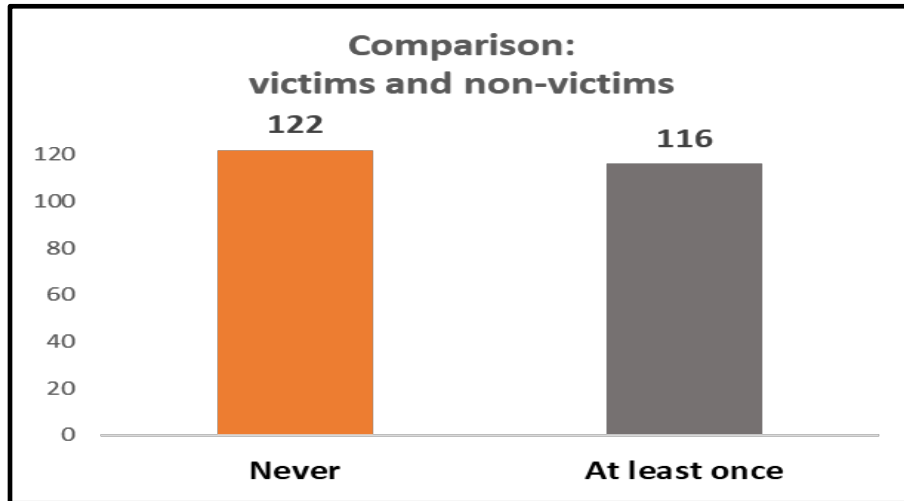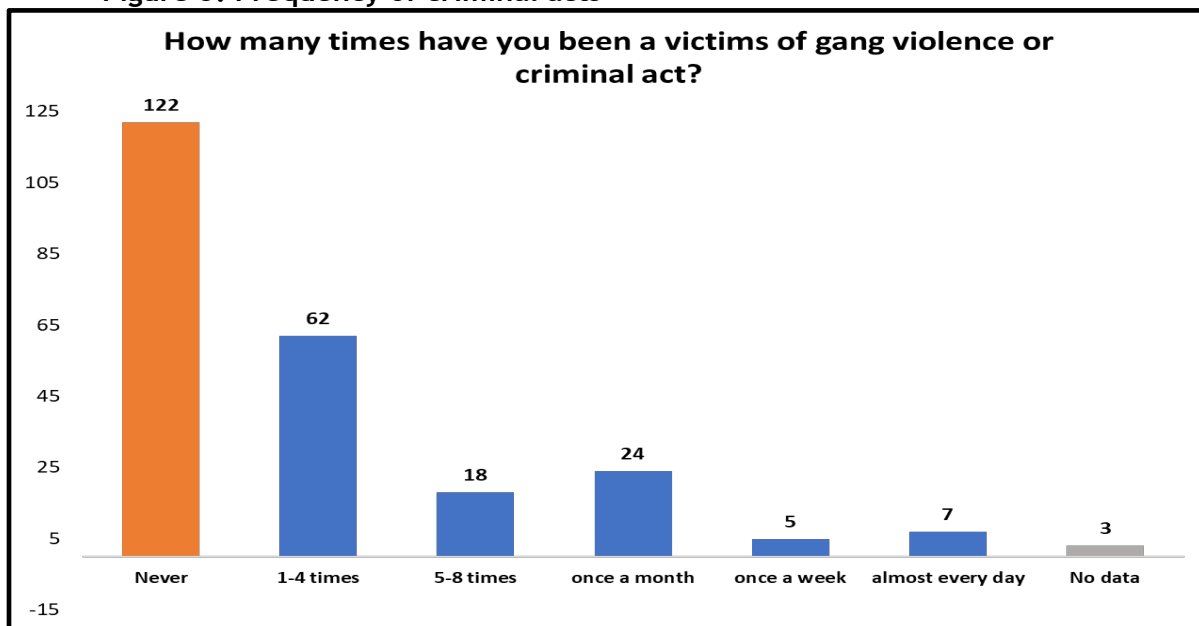[8] Focus group discussion, Freetown.

Comparison: victims and non-victims

Figure 5: Frequency of criminal acts

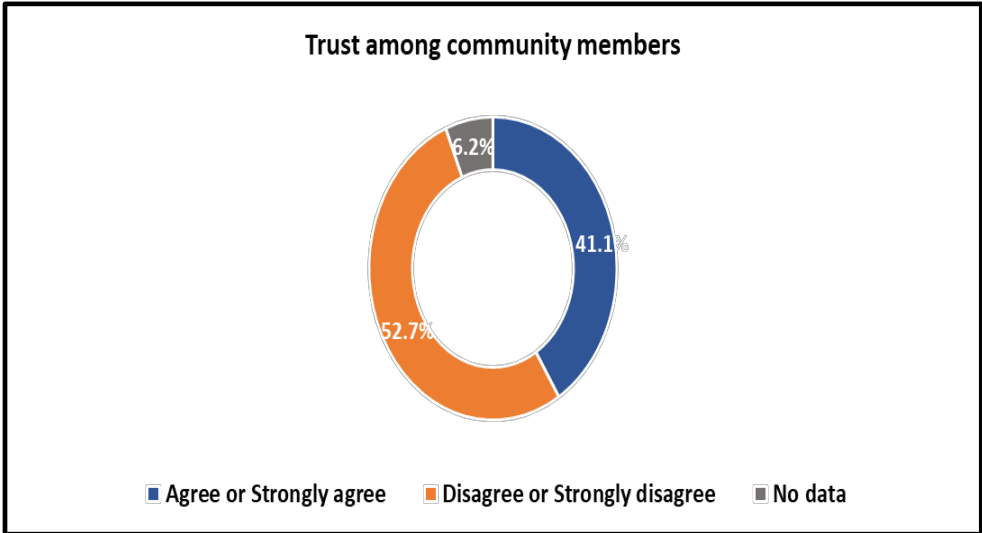How many times have you been a victims of gang violence or criminal act?

Modalities of recruitment

Based on reports from the ONS, about 2,500 gangs and cliques exist in Sierra Leone, with different levels of organization and capacity. Focus group discussions revealed that while certain groups present a clear chain of command, exert territorial control and

are able to project their influence, others have simple or even fragmented structures.[9] The group discussions also revealed that in certain cases, groups are able to consolidate alliances both at the local level or across regions, revealing their strength and level of organization. Moreover, these groups are present in a wide set of contexts, from primary schools to universities, from local communities to entire neighborhoods. In these contexts, classmates, peers, friends and other community members play a role in recruitment. Thus, the modalities of recruitment vary significantly.

While the recruitment into a gang/clique might be a voluntary decision, this process also occurs under harassment, physical threats, fear of retaliation, the need for protection and the feeling of belonging to a community.[10] As a result of these dynamics, social cohesion is severely undermined, as a majority of respondents – 53 per cent – indicate lacking trust in their local community members (*Figures 6 and 7*) and 56 per cent lack faith in law enforcement institutions (*Figure 8*).

Figure 6: Extent of community members who have trust in their peers

Trust among community members

6.2%

41.1%

52.7%

■ Agree or Strongly agree   ■ Disagree or Strongly disagree   ■ No data

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[9] Focus groups and DISEC discussions, Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kono.
[10] Focus groups discussions and individual interviews, Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kono.

Figure 7: Extent of community members who have trust in fellow community members, by town
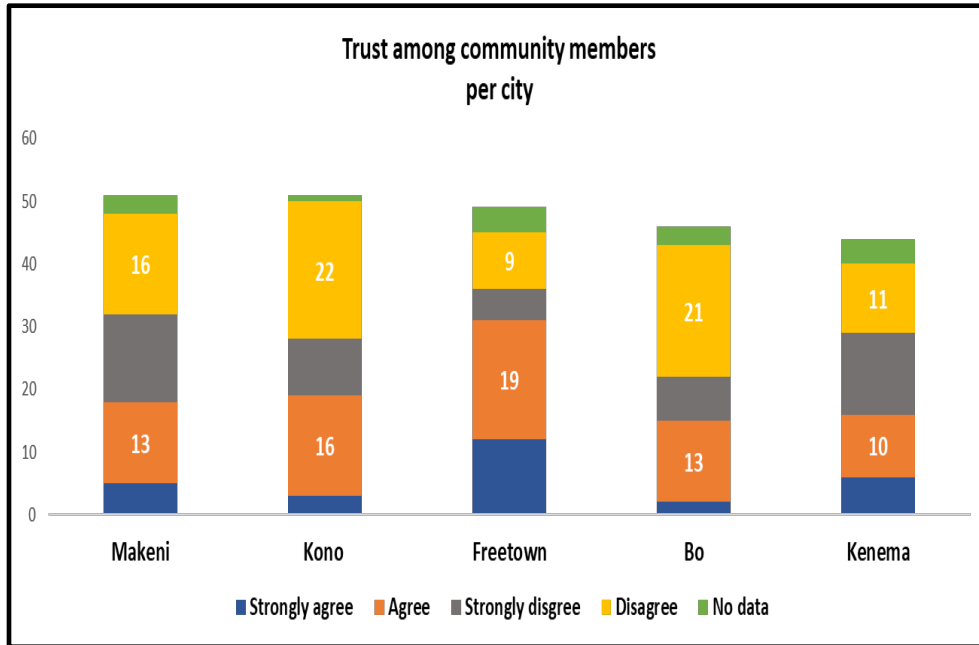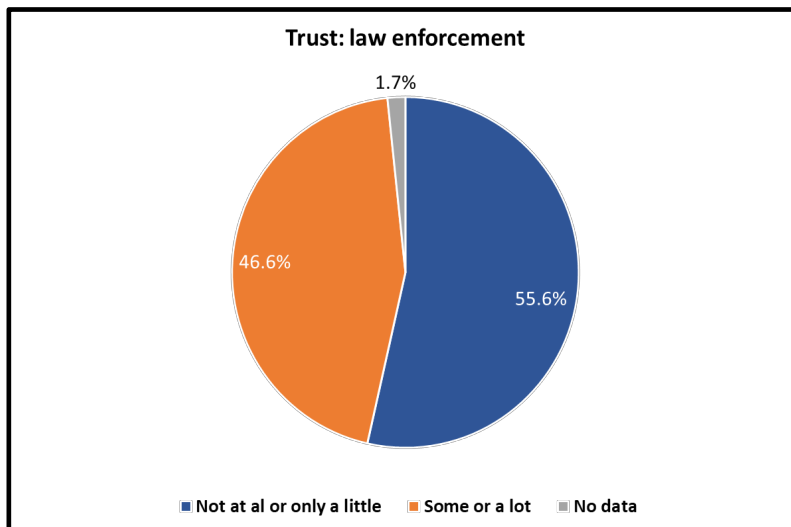
Trust among community members per city

City	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disgree	Disagree	No data
Makeni		13		16	
Kono		16		22	
Freetown		19		9	
Bo		13		21	
Kenema		10		11	

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Strongly disgree ■ Disagree ■ No data

Figure 8: Trust in law enforcement institutions, as perceived by interviewees

Trust: law enforcement

1.7%
46.6%
55.6%

■ Not at al or only a little ■ Some or a lot ■ No data

Even though boys and men constitute the majority of gang members, girls and women are also targeted and play a wide set of roles. While women might join the group

seeking protection, or due to a relationship with a gang member, they also participate in criminal activities (e.g., collecting intelligence, deception of victims, or even working as gang leaders known as *mamas)*. In certain cases, women who serve as sex workers are protected or part of gangs/cliques.[11]
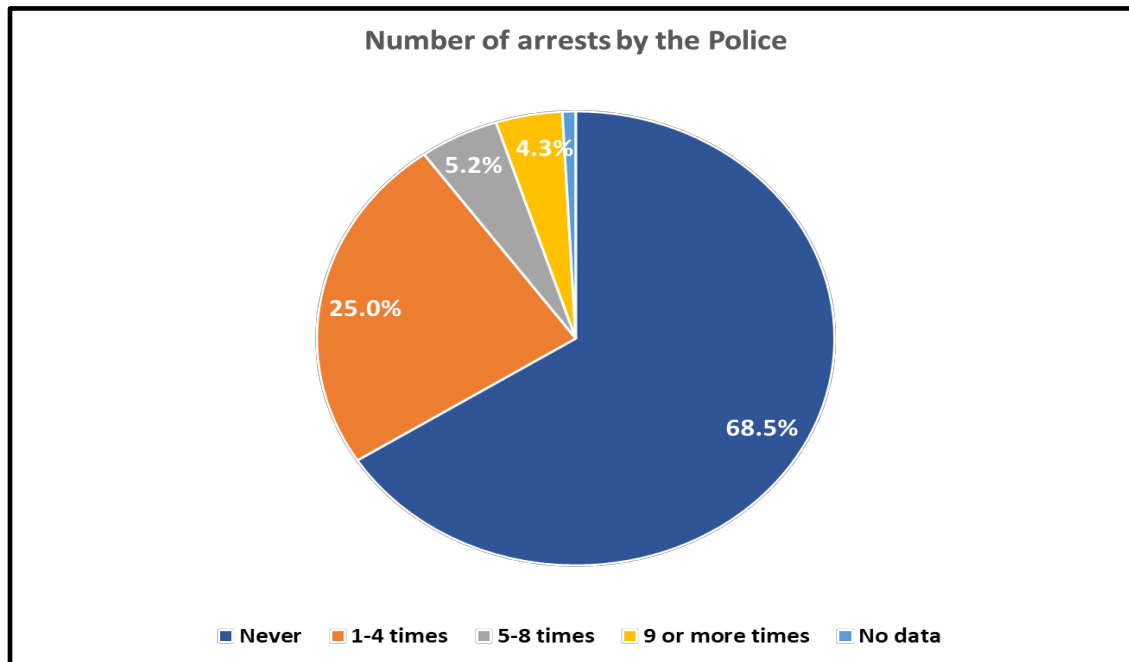
According to focus group discussions, among all the sources for recruitment, correction centres constitute one of the main recruiting platforms for gangs and cliques. In these centres, existing gangs are able to exert control over the facilities and recruit members to specific gangs that operate outside their perimeters. Moreover, since these centres mix convicted criminals – who represent 20 per cent of the prison population – with other inmates on remand or arrested for minor crimes, gangs are able to force new recruitments from all of these inmates. Often times, inmates are distributed within the prison according to decisions made by some of the long-serving inmate groups and end up having no alternative except to join the group. It must be stressed that many individuals are originally arrested for minor infractions like traffic violations. But, given the impossibility of paying the bail or having adequate legal representation, many are sent to correction facilities where they are exposed to the organized criminal groups. Further exacerbating this problem is the lack of rehabilitation programmes, which foments high recidivism among inmates.[12]

Figure 9 below shows the frequency of arrests among respondents, with a third of them having been arrested several times.

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[11] Focus groups discussion and interview with stakeholders, Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kono.
[12] Focus group discussions, Freetown.
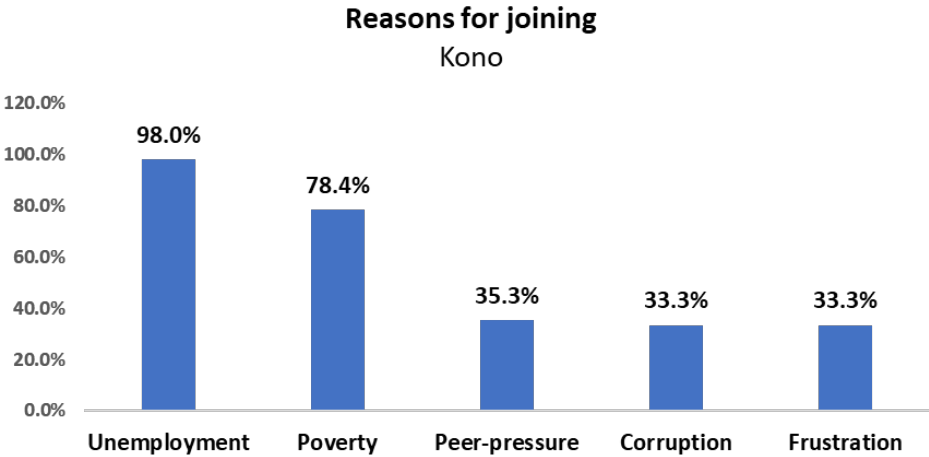
Figure 9: Frequency of arrests among respondents

Number of arrests by the Police

68.5%
25.0%
5.2%
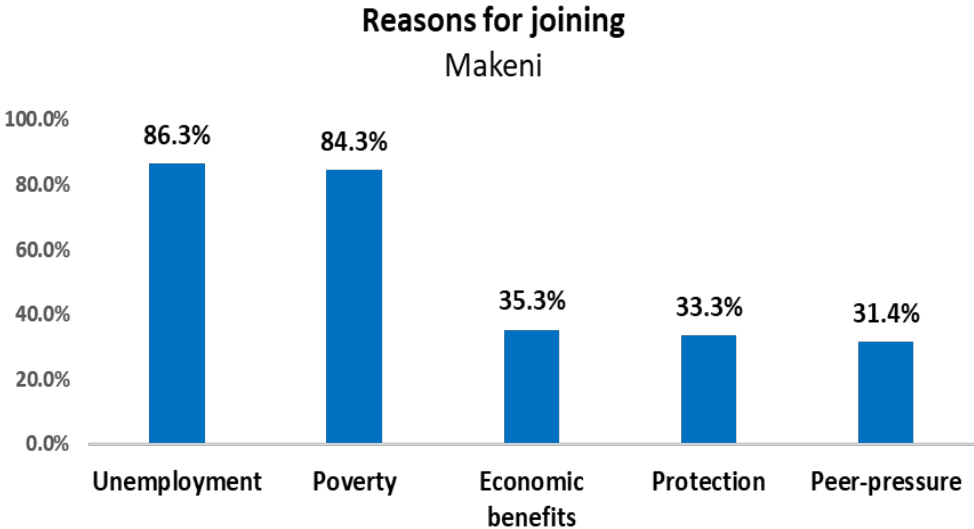4.3%

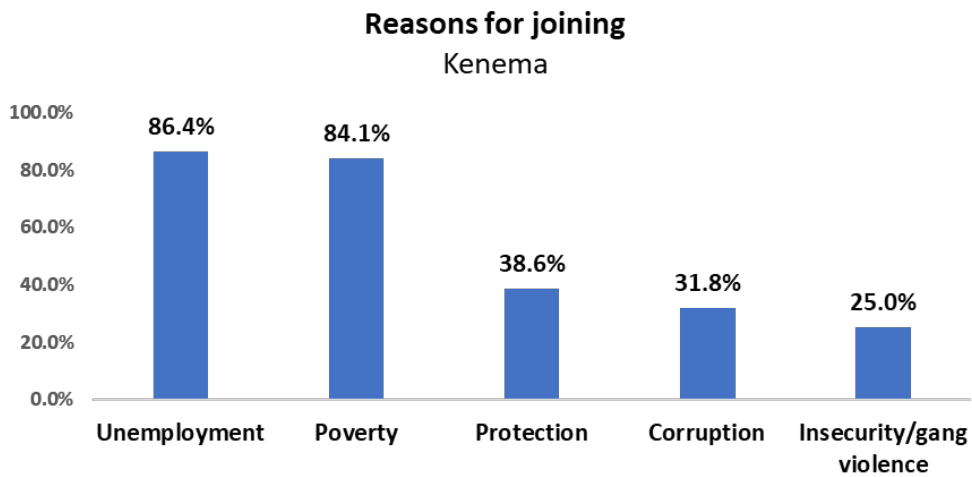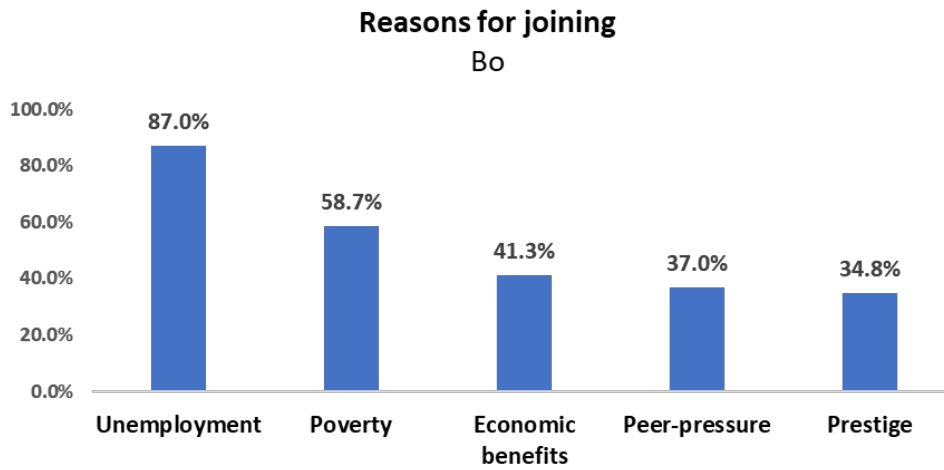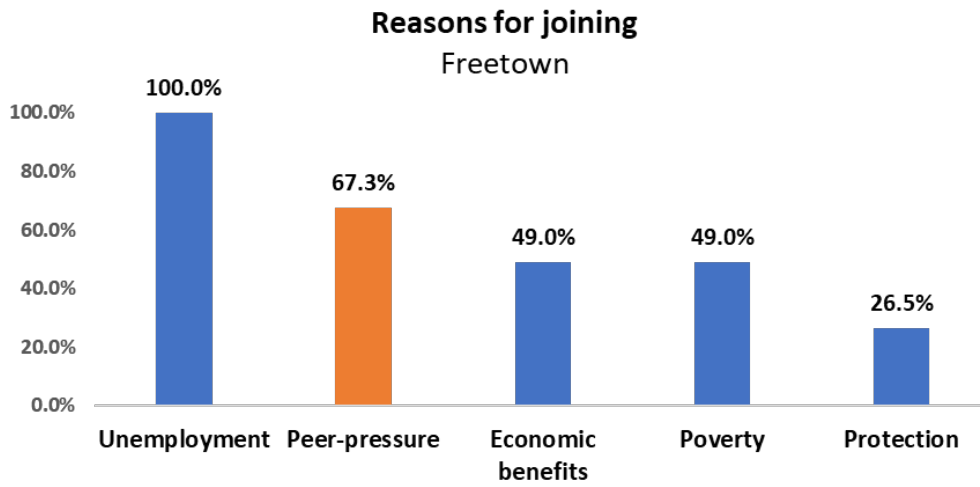■ Never ■ 1-4 times ■ 5-8 times ■ 9 or more times ■ No data

Unscrupulous politicians also play a role in mobilizing and recruiting youth into gangs and cliques, including by providing drugs and alcohol and promising impunity. The surge of gang-related violence has been reported in urban areas characterized by shifting political support (e.g. Kono). In these contexts, unscrupulous politicians use gang and cliques to ensure victory for their side, thus leading to clashes during elections and even more efforts to recruit more members.[13]

While the surge of gangs and cliques has been qualified as a national security threat by the ONS, gang members are on some occasions seen by community members as a help to them. In certain areas, gang members are perceived as a source of protection and, in fact, contacted whenever community members seek retaliation for a crime or abuse perpetrated against a family member.

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[13] Focus group discussion, Kono.

Figure 10: Main reasons for joining a gang or clique, by city

Reasons for joining
Makeni

Reasons for joining
Kono

Reasons for joining
Freetown

Unemployment	100.0%
Peer-pressure	67.3%
Economic benefits	49.0%
Poverty	49.0%
Protection	26.5%

Reasons for joining
Bo

Unemployment	87.0%
Poverty	58.7%
Economic benefits	41.3%
Peer-pressure	37.0%
Prestige	34.8%

Reasons for joining
Kenema

Unemployment	86.4%
Poverty	84.1%
Protection	38.6%
Corruption	31.8%
Insecurity/gang violence	25.0%

Main challenges and conditions conducive to violence

Socio-economic factors: Unemployment and inequality

As highlighted earlier, and illustrated in Figure 10, high unemployment and pervasive poverty across the country were identified as critical root causes for youth joining gangs and cliques across focus groups and in the survey results. Unemployment in Sierra Leone remains high, especially among young people.[14] At the same time, economic gains have been uneven and there is a growing sense of inequality in the country. Focus groups identified a widespread sense of frustration among youth about unmet socio-economic aspirations and a sense of marginalization.[15]

These focus groups also pointed out that, beyond unmet expectations, the lack of employment opportunities and social protections has left youth searching for income generating opportunities in the informal sector – including commercial sex work. Gang membership and associated activities can serve as a means to generate income to support families and provide livelihoods, making it an option for youth seeking sustainable sources of income.

 A 2018 study by the International Growth Centre (IGC) found that efforts by the Government to boost economic activity and employment had only a limited impact on youth employment.[16] The study also found that during economic growth periods a lack of attention to inter-group dynamics, especially urban-rural leads to a perception of increased inequality and can lead to heightened social tensions. The IGC's analysis shows that economic activity failed in generating broad based benefits for the wider population and "exacerbated inequality and inter-group resentment."

Focus groups pointed out that the potential for agricultural work as an area for employment and income generating activities remains underutilized. This is partly due to the lack of prestige associated with agricultural activities among youth. More work

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[14] Sierra Leone's Human Development Index value for 2017 is 0.419, which puts the country in the low category, at 184 out of 189 countries and territories.
[15] Focus group discussions, Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Kono, and Makeni.
[16] International Growth Centre, "The underlying causes of fragility and instability in Sierra Leone", April 2018, available at <www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Sierra-Leone-Report-v2.p>.

could be undertaken to change perceptions and tap into this key potential for employment.[17]

Focus groups also raised concerns that former members of the armed forces receive low pension payments, which has been a potential driver for some former members of the armed forces to engage with gangs for additional income.

These focus groups pointed out that former gang members tend to be generally excluded from public sector jobs due to their background and past activities, limiting employment opportunities for them and providing a disincentive for them to leave gangs.

The country's devolution process continues to move forward slowly. There are only limited services and employment opportunities outside of Freetown or the country's main cities. This has continued to fuel a high level of migration towards cities. The high urban migration rate, in addition to the growing overall population in the country, are putting pressure on housing prices and leading to a further expansion of slums and informal settlements.

While socio-economic factors have been the most frequent cited factors for gang formation and membership, focus groups also pointed out that while "poverty is as old as society itself" and there has been poverty in Sierra Leone for a long time, the phenomenon of widespread gang activity was more recent. Focus groups also highlighted that in fact some members of gangs come from middle-class backgrounds. All this indicates a more complex relationship between gang membership and socio-economic causes. Below is a list of additional causes identified during the assessment.

Other factors for the growth of gangs

Public institutions: police, prisons and the justice system

Focus group participants and the survey results point towards a state-society divide, and recent studies, including the 2018 IGC study, found a general lack of trust in

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[17] Focus group discussions, Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Kono, and Makeni.

institutions of government, lack of effective decentralization and weak accountability for the delivery of public services, as well as a perception of unfair distribution of benefits from Government. Focus groups and survey findings highlight that in many cases traditional and local institutions tend to have a greater legitimacy in society than national Government institutions. The survey results show that among youth, there are deep-rooted frustrations with state institutions, particularly police, judiciary and local security authorities.

This assessment did not analyse this feedback in depth, but based on the feedback received, the social contract at the state-society level appears weak. The assessment focused on three central state institutions – the police force, the prison system and the justice system – as the most cited and most critical institutions engaged in curbing the spread of gang activity in the country.

The police and court system

The assessment discussed with focus groups the challenges faced by the police force in engaging and reducing gang membership and activity as well as the perception of the police by communities and gang members. The results show that a significant percentage of the respondents do not have full trust in the police. A 2017 Transparency International survey showed that the police were perceived as among the most corrupt among Government services and overall the public confidence in police has eroded.

However, members of the police force who were part of the focus groups said that they believe the police in Sierra Leone lack the legal framework, equipment and specific training to adequately address gang activity. For instance, they do not have the adequate equipment to fully engage and contain gang activity, including enough vehicles to patrol at night. However, as the most significant hindrance to reduce gang activity according to the police was an insufficient legal basis to more pro-actively deal with gangs. Sierra Leone does not have a specific law focused on general gang membership, as the public order act is outdated. Police also pointed out that the legal system has few provisions for engaging with young offenders. Some of the gang members arrested are as young as 10 years old. But the law has few provisions for

arresting minors and the police feel they lack the legal and political guidance to engage with minors and gang activity.

The police officers also raised concerns about an "ineffective court system." Some officers felt that while they arrested and charged criminals, very few ended up going to prison, creating potentially a form of "impunity for gang violence." Some police even expressed that they are "afraid" of gangs, especially when gang members are released back into the public after an arrest that did not result in a conviction. Some cited increasing incidences of gang members attacking police. Some focus groups cited that attacking police can help gang members rise among their ranks. In several areas surveyed for this assessment, the police have at times asked for military support to address gang activity, including during national exams at universities, and night patrols.

Focus group feedback shows that the military is more 'feared' than the police, but critical questions have been raised about the use of force by security forces in Sierra Leone and the respect for human rights. Focus groups indicate a general perception among security forces that often there is too much emphasis on rights and not on responsibilities of individuals in society, while youth members interviewed raised concerns about the excessive use of force by security forces. Bike riders, market vendors and commercial sex workers interviewed for this assessment raised concerns about being unfairly targeted by police and arrested for minor crimes, which can have a significant impact on their life and livelihoods and may even lead them to engage with gangs for protection.

Feedback from focus groups has shown a general concern both among police and the general population over the lack of capacity in the court system, especially at the local level where the insufficient number of resident magistrates can cause delays and lead to extended incarcerations. This aspect was also raised by the Human Rights Commission, as Commissioners visited correction centres around the country and met with detainees who remained in prison longer than their sentences.

The prison system

The prison system is critical to understanding recruitment patterns of gangs and the continuing spread of gang activity across the country. The national prison system recently underwent reforms with an emphasis on turning the system into a correctional and rehabilitation system. However, focus groups generally voiced that the reforms had not yet been successful and that prisons required significantly more resources and further reforms.

As per ONS figures shared during focus group discussions, a significant percentage (70–80 per cent) of the prison population are youth. Correctional facilities in Sierra Leone are significantly overcrowded and there is only limited vocational and skills training available at the facilities. At the same time, these services are provided only to convicted inmates, who represent a minority (20 per cent) of the incarcerated population. There are also few psychosocial or drug rehabilitation facilities. In the entire country, there are only two juvenile rehabilitation centres, resulting in juveniles being integrated with the general prison population. There are also no juvenile rehabilitation homes. Children in conflict with the law have little access to rehabilitation overall, and when they are released back into communities, they often become victims of retribution themselves.

The inmate population of correction facilities is therefore a mix of pre-trial detainees, individuals convicted of minor crimes and of individuals convicted of serious crimes. The mix of both minor criminals and pre-trial detainees along with individuals convicted of more serious crimes has been described by one individual interviewed as a "school of crime," where inmates with a minor criminal background are groomed for engaging in potentially more serious crimes once released from prison. Criminals who join gangs out of need for protection in prisons may find it difficult or impossible to relinquish gang membership once they are released from prison. They are recruited into an intimate network of prison inmates and gang members outside the prisons.

Overall, focus groups painted a picture of an understaffed and under-resourced prison system, with levels of corruption and abuse that act as a significant recruitment ground for gangs.

The role of the family

A root cause for young people joining and engaging with gangs that was identified across focus groups is the role of the family. Focus groups have stated that many of the gang members come from single parent households, are orphans or semi-orphans and often lack both parental guidance and a social support net to stop them from joining gangs. The rise in the number of single parent households can also be linked to an increasing number of teenage pregnancies, including as a result of violence and rape during the 2014 Ebola crisis.

Focus groups also raised the point that Sierra Leone has moved away from a system of 'community parenting' where communities felt responsible for raising and supporting children, to a system of individual parental responsibility. If parents are not around or feel overwhelmed, the system does not offer them support, and children may become neglected.

Increasing patterns of urban migration have also resulted in a separation of children and youth from their families, including using a guardian for when children are going to school away from home. In many cases this has further weakened the social and family support available to children.

The lack of livelihood opportunities for parents and guardians has in some cases led to child labour and children skipping school to pursue income generating activities. Where parents can provide financially for their children, the lack of childcare options may result in them spending too little time supervising their children and their activities during the day. Some focus groups raised concerns about unsupervised children skipping school and falling prey to gang recruitment. Police interviewed argued that "some youth are joining gangs as they are seeking alternatively families to belong to," and that "if you don't have a job and education, gangs can be your support network in the absence of strong family support."

Another concern raised that was related to the absence of a strong family network and support was the lack of positive role models for children and youth. Youth frequently

consider gang leaders as role models of success and power. Furthermore, rapidly expanding access to social media and instantaneous information dissemination has provided access to violent and pornographic material for children and youth. Focus groups voiced concerns over youth wanting to emulate gangsterism and a glorification of violence in music and film. There is also a growing level of disinformation being spread and, in some instances, social media has been used to incite violence.

Educational institutions as recruitment centres

Focus group discussions and surveys show that schools and universities are seen both as a critical source of community resilience and central places for gang recruitment. Focus groups have said that in some cases secondary and high schools as well as universities have been infiltrated by gangs and become recruitment places for gang members. Recruitment has also spread to primary schools where children as young as 9 years old are targeted for gang membership. The recruitment is both voluntary and by force and focus groups said that in some cases even teachers have become part of gangs and are involved in recruiting students.

School administration officials are aware of the problem and some are trying to fight back but have limited resources to do so. Expelling children from school may do little in reducing gang membership and in fact push children further into gang activity.

Focus groups also pointed to the currently inadequate number of social workers in schools and the need for schools to further strengthen their guidance counselling capacities and also provide comprehensive sexual education (CSE) to reduce the number of unwanted teen pregnancies.

The focus groups said that at the university level, gang membership was linked to historical networks and to political and party affiliation. However, gangs are increasingly linking up with groups outside universities and inter-gang conflict has turned more violent in recent times, with significant damage to property. Students who do not want to join gangs may have to pay protection money and some individuals

interviewed for this assessment indicated that the amount of protection money could be equal to or even greater than the tuition that students pay.

Gender dimension

The gender dimension of youth at risk should be analysed through the lens of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, which hinder the possibility for girls to continue their education and frequently force them into unhealthy relationships and forms of exploitations that increase the risk of social marginalization for the girls and their children.

Child marriage is a major issue affecting youth in Sierra Leone: 12.5 per cent of girls are married by the age of 15 and 38.9 per cent of girls are married by the age of 18 (among 20–24-year-olds).[18] Sierra Leone is ranked as the country with the 18th highest rate of child marriage in the world.[19] Currently, there is no specific law on child marriage. However, the Customary Marriage and Divorce Act states that a child can be married at the age of 16 with the consent of the parents. However, the Sexual Offences Act states that a child (defined as somebody under the age of 18) cannot engage in sexual activity. This contradiction is addressed in the Child Marriage Bill, whose review is currently being undertaken by the Attorney General. This Bill, if enacted, will make it illegal for a person under the age of 18 to enter into marriage.

Access to family planning for youth in Sierra Leone is limited, with only 5.8 per cent of married 15-to-19-year-olds having their demand for contraception satisfied.[20] Pregnancy rates are high among adolescents. According to the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, approximately 28 per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 19 have begun childbearing in Sierra Leone. The age-specific fertility rate is high and estimated at 125 per 1,000 for the 15–19 age group. Mirroring global statistics, maternal mortality is the leading cause of death among females aged 15–19 in Sierra Leone,

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[18] United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a digital world*, UNICEF, New York, 2017.
[19] Ibid.
[20] United Nations Population Fund, *Marrying too young,* UNFPA, New York, 2012.

accounting for nearly half (46.8 per cent) of deaths. The high rate of pregnancy among adolescents is a clear indication of limited knowledge, minimal use of contraceptives and other sexual and reproductive health services. The increasing recognition of child marriage as a national problem in Sierra Leone – especially given the strong link between child marriage and adolescent pregnancy – has led to the need to address the two issues jointly. Thus, the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018–2022 details the commitments of multisector stakeholders across five Government ministries to tackle the challenge of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage. The ministries are the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The 2018–2022 strategy is organized around six pillars: Pillar 1: Policy and legal environment; Pillar 2: Adolescent and young people friendly services; Pillar 3: Enabling school environments, including CSE; Pillar 4: Communication and advocacy; Pillar 5: Community ownership; and Pillar 6: Coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

CSE is a key component in the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage. The Government of Sierra Leone committed to CSE at the Family Planning 2020 Summit: "The government is committed to the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education and policies related to its implementation will be in the revised National Education Policy. Age appropriate CSE will be integrated in the curriculum through the main subject areas from Upper Primary School to Senior Secondary School. The government is committed to scale-up and strengthen the existing CSE training (Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Life Skills) to Primary School teachers and expand this to Upper Primary School (UPS), Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS), technical and vocational institutions, teacher training colleges and out of school learning centres. The MoHS and Ministry of Education Science and Technology will reach out of school adolescents through safe spaces, learning centres in partnership with CSOs."

This commitment was reiterated in the Education Sector Plan 2018-2020. "The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to the implementation of CSE and policies related to its implementation will be in the revised National Education Policy. Age appropriate CSE will be integrated in the curriculum through the main subject areas from Upper Primary School to Senior Secondary School. The government is committed to scale-up and strengthen the existing CSE training (Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Life Skills) to Primary School teachers and expand this to Upper Primary School (UPS), Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS), technical and vocational institutions, teacher training colleges and out of school learning Centres." The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education is currently working to implement CSE, with UN support.

Gender disparities increase with school progression with the largest disparities in favour of boys at the SSS level (0.75).[21] Girls' retention rates are lower than boys' at every level and although the primary to JSS transition rate is almost the same for boys and girls, the transition from JSS to SSS is more favourable to boys, demonstrated by the gross enrolment rate at SSS of 78 percent, compared with 58.3 per cent for girls. Findings from the UNICEF 2016 *Out of School Children* study indicate that nearly 3 out of every 10 (29 per cent) out-of-school girls are excluded from school as a result of teenage pregnancy.[22]

Recommendations

1.   Provision of market-based livelihood opportunities for vulnerable youth

The Ministry of Youth Affairs has begun to work with vulnerable youth by supporting youth farming plots at the district level. These plots allow youth the opportunity to build their skills and confidence in agriculture. It is recommended that the Ministry of Youth Affairs work with relevant line ministries and development partners to build on

[29] Statistics Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census, Thematic Report on education and literacy*, Stats SL, Freetown.
[22] United Nations Children's Fund, *A National Assessment of the Situation of Out-of-School Children in Sierra Leone*, UNICEF, 2016.

this work, specifically in the inclusion of value chain addition. Additionally, consideration should be given to building non-agricultural vocational skills, based on robust market analysis and engage the private sectors as key stakeholders in employment generation. All proposed interventions should be gender inclusive in nature, including both young women and men.

Decentralization of services and the generation of employment opportunities at the district level will help to avoid the migration of youth to urban areas like Freetown. The potential for expansion of other urban centres should be explored.

2. Strengthening capacity of the Sierra Leone Police

The Sierra Leone Police should be equipped with skills and techniques to address situations related to at-risk youth. The Community Policing services should be expanded and the engagement of youth groups in policy discussions with security stakeholders should be facilitated.

3. School retention and reintegration

The introduction of free education is a key factor in ensuring youth are empowered to make informed decisions around their future and to mitigate the risk of them becoming involved in cliques and gangs due to lack of economic opportunities. However, it was reported that sometimes schools could act as recruitment grounds for cliques and gangs. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education should empower teachers, in particular, guidance counsellors, to ensure that schools remain a safe space for students. Secondly, the issue of out-of-school children persists. In order to reintegrate these learners into formal education there is need to invest in existing community learning centres in the short to medium term. It is important to note that this investment should not look to set up alternatives to formal education but rather to promote reintegration to primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools.

### 4.	Reduction of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage

Teenage pregnancy and child marriage are key factors contributing to the vulnerability of female youth. The Ministry of Youth Affairs is currently one of the five ministries engaged in the multi-sectoral response to the reduction of teenage pregnancy and child marriage. A key element of the response to teenage pregnancy, which was raised in focus group discussions with youth, was the lack of age appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health. It is thus suggested that the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education introduce age tailored sexual and reproductive education in the school curricula.

### 5.	Support for parents

Lack of parental support was identified as a key contributor to youth involvement in cliques and gangs. It is recommended that the Ministry of Youth Affairs liaise with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs to mobilize and empower parents for them to support their children to remain in formal education and not to engage in cliques and gangs. In particular, parents should be engaged in reducing child labour and sextortion of girls by older males within the community.

### 6.	Availability of cheap alcohol

A concern which was repeatedly raised was the easy and cheap access to alcohol, which is often cheaper than food, contributing to trapping youth in a cycle of addiction and, furthermore, acts as a means for gangs to induce young people into membership. It is recommended that the easy availability of alcohol be reviewed.

### 7.	Increasing public awareness of drug abuse

A common topic, which permeated the assessment, was the abuse of drugs. Of particular interest was the misuse of prescription drugs, such as Tramadol. In order to mitigate this problem, it was suggested that the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of

Health and Sanitation work together to engage and build awareness among youth of the dangers of drug abuse.

8. Strengthening institutional response and promoting alternative measures to incarceration for the rehabilitation of youth

As noted earlier, correctional centres often serve as a site for recruitment of gang members. Many youths find themselves in correctional centres due to minor offences, such as loitering or traffic violations. However, as they are unable to get financial support for legal aid or to meet bail requirements, they remain within correctional centres. This is of particular concern for inmates under the age of 18 who, due to inadequate space within the country's two correctional schools, might find themselves detained with adults. A new Correctional Centre, which is under construction at Waterloo, is expected to be completed soon. The new centre will have the capacity to host 120 males and 10 females and will help to decongest the Male Correctional Centre on Pademba Road in Freetown, which currently holds three times the number of inmates it was established for. It is, however, recommended that additional facilities are constructed and provided with the required services to ensure that their function as rehabilitation centres is met, particularly in the case of children. Alternative measures to detention should also be explored in the case of children as well as in the case of minor offences such as traffic infractions and minor financial offences. The implementation of the new bail policy and the acceleration of case trials should also be ensured, as they will help to decrease the inmate population. Relevant laws should be reviewed and adapted to the changing reality of at-risk youth and communities.

9. Inter-institutional coordination: A one-stop shop for at-risk youth

In order to respond to the complex reality of at-risk youth, it is recommended that inter-institutional coordination is established among relevant ministries and state institutions (ONS, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender

and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Transnational Organized Crime Unit, etc.), which could articulate all the services and information to be provided to youth, including at-risk youth. This will also help to increase knowledge about the complexities of the situation of young people to be able to better tailor institutional responses to them.   In addition, a holistic approach to the reality of young people might also help families and communities to better understand and respond to the needs of young people.

10.   Regional and sub-regional dimensions

From the focus group discussions and individual interviews, it has emerged that the expansion of cliques and gangs is a cross-border phenomenon. Opportunities for employment generation should, therefore, be explored at the sub-regional level. Knowledge exchange should be facilitated with other countries, including in the field of school curriculum, marketable skills and civic education development addressed to young people in the sub-region and region.

ANNEX 1

Plan for the Assessment on Youth
Wednesday 14 – Friday 23 August 2019
as of 13 August 2019
TENTATIVE AGENDA

Wed. 14 August				Responsible of organization
	09h30 10h00		Travel to ONS	RCO
	10h00 12h30	**ONS**	Round table discussion on Youth at risk Participants: MYA-Police-ONS-Correction-TOCU-FSU-MSWGCA (Dir. Social Welfare) – National Youth Services-MIA-LAB- Ministry of Planning	MoYA (RCO to provide tea & coffee)
	TBC		**Lunch**	
Group 1	13:00 15:00	**Vice President Office**	Meeting with Vice-President UN participants: RC- PDA - OROLSI/Mario Nascimento)	MoYA
Group 2	15:30 16:30	**ONS**	Training on assessment tools + information sharing on youth	RCO

Thursday 15 August				Responsible of organization
	09h00 09h30		Travel from Hotel to ONS	
	09:30 10:30	**ONS**	Focus Group discussion with ONS on Security Architecture (CHISEC, DISEC, Chiefdom Police, etc) and in-depth discussion on Youth Groups + Q&A	**M0YA**
	10:30 11:00		Travel from ONS to Mental Health Clinic	
	11:00 12:00	**Mental Health Clinic**	Meeeting with Dr. Edward Nahim	**MoYA**
	12:00 12:15		Travel from MH to Police HQ	
	12h15 13h15	**Police HQ**	Meeting with Dir. Correction +Police Prison Watch+ Human Right Commission+CHDI	**MoYA**
	13h15 14h15	**Lunch**		
	14h30 15h30	**NACSA**	Meeting with Director/Commissioner (USD 20m programme for youth employment)	**MoYA**
	15h30 16h00		Travel from NACSA to FCC	

	16h00 17h00	**FCC**	Meeting with City Council (Focus of the meeting on situation in the slams)	**MoYA**

Friday 16 August				
	08h30 09h00		Travel to UNFPA Conference Room	
	09h00 10h00	**UNFPA (TBC) Conference Room**	Meeting with civil Society Organizations: - Coordination of Youth Activities (CYA) - Campaign for good Governance -Women 50/50 -Centre for Accountability and RoL - Restless Development - Human Rights Network	**UN RCO**
			Admin Break	
	10:30 11:30	**UNFPA (TBC) Conference Room**	Meeting with Market Women Association	**UN RCO**
	11:30 12:30	**UNFPA (TBC) Conference Room**	PPRC and All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA), All Political Parties Women Association (APPWA), All Political Political Parties Association (APPA)	**MoYA**
	14:00 15:00	**UNFPA (TBC) Conference Room**	Bike Rider Association	**RCO**
Monday 19 August			**District Towns Bo**	
	09h00 10h00		District Youth Council	
	10h15 12h00		Meeting with DISEC (ONS-Police-Correction-NGOs-MIA-etc)	ONS
	12h15 13h00		Meeting with Motor Bike Association	MoYA
	13h00 14h00	**Lunch**		
	14h00 15h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (Youth at risk- boys)	ONS
	15h00 16h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (women and girls at risk)	ONS
	16h00 17h00		Youth Group at risk	

Tuesday 20 August			District Towns Kenema	
	08h00 09h00		Departure from Bo to Kenema	
	09h00 10h00		District Youth Council	MoYA
	10h15 12h00		Meeting with DISEC (ONS-Police-Correction-NGOs-MIA-etc)	ONS
	12h15 13h00		Meeting with Motor Bike Association	MoYA
	13h00 14h00	Lunch		
	14h00 15h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (Youth at risk- boys)	ONS
	15h00 16h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (women and girls at risk)	ONS
	16h00 17h00		Youth Group at risk	ONS
Wednesday 21 August			Return from Kenema to Freetown	
	08h00 13h00		Travel to Freetown	

Monday 19 August			District Towns Makeni	
	09h00 10h00		District Youth Council	
	10h15 12h00		Meeting with DISEC (ONS-Police-Correction-NGOs-MIA-etc)	ONS
	12h15 13h00		Meeting with Motor Bike Association	MoYA
	13h00 14h00	Lunch		
	14h00 15h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (Youth at risk- boys)	ONS
	15h00 16h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (women and girls at risk)	ONS
	16h00 17h00		Youth Group at risk	

Tuesday 20 August			District Town Kono	
	08h00 11h00		Departure from Makeni to Kono	
	11h00		District Youth Council	MoYA

	12h00			
	12h15 13h30		Meeting with DISEC (ONS-Police-Correction-NGOs-MIA-etc)	ONS
	13h30 14h30		**Lunch**	
	14h30 15h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (Youth at risk- boys)	ONS
	15h00 16h00		Meeting with Youth Groups (women and girls at risk)	ONS
	16h00 17h00		Youth Group at risk	ONS
Wednesday 21 August			**Return from Kono to Freetown**	
	08h00 16h00		Travel to Freetown	

Thu. 22 August			**Freetown Group**	**Responsible of organization**
	10h00 10h00	ONS	Compiling findings	RCO
	14h00 16h00		Debriefing from the Groups Participants: MYA-Police-ONS-Correction-TOCU-FSU-MSWCG-MIA	MoYA

Friday 23 August			**All Groups**	**Responsible of organization**
				RCO
	10h00 11h30	ONS meeting room		MoYA

ANNEX 2

Indicative Perception Survey

<u>This survey is anonymous and confidential</u>

The purpose of the survey is to develop a broadly-shared understanding of community dynamics which contribute to the mobilization of youth into gangs and identify elements/areas of interventions which could empower them to become a productive force at the community level.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Should you decide to participate in this exercise, you may withdraw at any time. Should you decide not to participate in this study, you will not be penalized. The survey is expected to take approximately XX minutes.
Do you agree/consent to participate in the survey? ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No**
For minors, consent of the adult responsible is required. No individual younger than 15 should be interviewed, regarding of guardian consent.

1. Personal Information

Location: ☐ Location A   ☐ Location B   ☐ Location C ☐ Location D

Gender: ☐ **Male** ☐ **Female**	**Age:** ☐ **15-18** ☐ **18- 24** ☐ **24+**	
1.1 What is your current occupation? ☐ Formally employed ☐ Informally employed ☐ Student ☐ Volunteer ☐ Not employed	**1.2 Marital Status:** ☐ Single ☐ Married Monogamous ☐ Married Polygamous ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed	**1.3 Education:** ☐ No formal education ☐Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Post-secondary ☐ Vocational training ☐ University

2. Exposure to community violence[i]

2.1 Thinking about your neighborhood, how much of a problem is…

	Not a problem	Kind of a problem	A big problem
a) people drinking in public spaces	☐	☐	☐
b) people using or being addicted to drugs	☐	☐	☐
c) selling drugs	☐	☐	☐
d) poverty – families not having enough to for basic needs	☐	☐	☐
e) groups of teenagers just hanging out around, causing trouble	☐	☐	☐
f) Gunshots, shootings and gun violence	☐	☐	☐

2.2 How many times have you been a victim of gang violence or criminal act?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

2.3 How many times have you <u>seen someone else</u> being a victim of gang violence?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

2.3 Where does gang violence or related acts normally occur?
☐ near home ☐ near school ☐ near work ☐ near social areas ☐ Other: _____

2.4 How often do you see people using or selling drugs?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

2.5 How many times have you been asked to get involved in any aspect of selling or distributing illegal drugs?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

Who asked?

☐ Adult stranger ☐ adult friend ☐ Young stranger ☐ young friend ☐ relatives

2.6 How many times have you been asked to use illegal drugs?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

2.7 How many times have you yourself actually been picked-up, arrested, or taken away by the police?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

2.8 How many times have you yourself actually been threatened with serious physical harm by someone?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

2.9 How many times have you only heard about someone being sexually assaulted, molested, or raped?
☐ never ☐ 1-4 times ☐ 5-8 times ☐ once a week ☐ once a month ☐ almost every day

2.10 How easy would it be for you to get a gun?
☐ Impossible ☐ Difficult ☐ Fairly easy ☐ Very easy

2.11 How easy do you think it is for other kids in your neighborhood to obtain a gun?
☐ Impossible ☐ Difficult ☐ Fairly easy ☐ Very easy

2.11 In your opinion, what are the main reasons for joining a gang (push and pull factors)?

<u>Selection only 5 options</u>, which you consider most relevant, ranking them in order of relevance (From 1, highly important to 5 less relevant)

☐ Unemployment	☐ Poverty	☐ Economic benefits
☐ Lack of basic services	☐ Insecurity/gang violence	☐ Prestige

☐ Protection	☐ Abuse of authority	☐ Corruption
☐ Absence of State	☐ Human Rights violations	☐ Social grievance
☐ Political	☐ Injustice	☐ Inequality
☐ Social exclusion	☐Frustration	☐ Victimization/traumas

Other: _____

Please justify your answer:

3. Protective environment[ii]

3.1 People in my neighborhood can be trusted.
☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

3.2 In general, how much do you trust the police in your community/neighborhood?
☐ A lot ☐ Some ☐ Only a little ☐ Not at all

3.3 Do you feel safe...

	Never/Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly/Always
a) In your school building	☐	☐	☐
b) At home	☐	☐	☐
c) At work	☐	☐	☐
d) On your street	☐	☐	☐
d) In your neighborhood	☐	☐	☐

4. Areas of intervention

4.1 Are you aware of any projects/programmes implemented in your neighborhood, which focus on addressing community violence? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe the initiative, highlighting its objectives, impact and leading institution:

4.2 Have you been part of the any project/programme focused on addressing community violence? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide details on your participation (e.g. beneficiary or implementing partner):

4.3 In your opinion, what is/are the key institution(s) present in your neighborhood which contribute to addressing community violence? <u>Select one or more options</u>:

☐ Institution A   ☐ Institution B   ☐ Institution C ☐ Institution D ☐ Others _____

Please justify your answer:

4.4 In your opinion, what are the main areas of intervention that contribute in addressing community violence?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) formal education	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) vocational training	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) income generating project	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) provision of basic services	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) rehabilitation of public infrastructure	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) community engagement/outreach	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) law enforcement/ security	☐	☐	☐	☐

Among the options, what are the 2-3 priority areas? Please justify your answers:

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[i] The document is based on a wide set of methods or reference documents, including the following: Stanford Survey of Exposure to Community Violence (SECV): Self Report Version.
[ii] Based on Harvard Youth Survey.