Youth Position Paper
Prepared for the Crime Prevention Alliance

by

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1. Introduction

Youth have occupied a central position in current debates on crime and violence in South Africa. Discussions about youth crime as well as youth victimisation have been highly emotionally charged and often simplistically framed as being a result of poor parenting, poverty HIV or other challenges. This paper aims to highlight the existing knowledge about youth crime and victimisation and some of the risk and resilience factors that point us to various interventions to reduce youth crime and violence. Some of these programmes (especially those that exist in South Africa) will be discussed and current government and NGO activities as well as gaps in crime prevention will be elaborated.

The definition of youth is seldom agreed upon. Official policy states that youth are between the ages of 14-35. However, this is a very diverse range of ages and certainly the factors that predict crime and the interventions that reduce it are likely to vary within this age. For the purposes of this paper it is also important that children below 14 years are included as a large number of the most successful primary crime prevention projects are implemented with this age group. We will therefore include all people below the age of 25 in this paper as this is the age group most likely to be involved in crime as well as the age group that many of the successful interventions have targeted. Where relevant, the specific age group that an intervention, risk factor or policy refers to will be specified.

In South Africa it is often assumed that the population is very youthful. This is true although the age of the population has been increasing over the years. The 2001 census indicated that approximately 26% of the population was 24 years or younger (Statssa, 2003). In 1996, the median age for the whole population is 22 years old (Simelane, 2003). Populations with median ages between 20 and 29 are usually referred to as being of intermediate age (Shryock cited in Simelane, 2003). However, what is clear is that this varies enormously across geographical areas. For example, the Northern Province has a median age of 17 Years and the Eastern Cape 19 years whereas Gauteng has a median age of 27 years. These figures also vary greatly between urban and rural areas with rural areas typically having a youthful population (median of 18 years) and urban populations having an intermediate population (median of 26 years).

If we consider that the age groups 15-25 are the groups most likely to be involved in crime, then it is clear that a large proportion of South Africa's population falls within this high risk age group. The number of young people in South Africa indicates that they are likely to be disproportionately perpetrators and victims of crime.

Youth in South Africa play an important role in the family and the economy. Family

structures in South Africa vary greatly as does the amount of responsibility that youth have within the family. In the youth 2000 report (Case, 2000), which surveyed a sample of people aged 15-35, half of the respondents stated that their parents made financial decisions in the family. However, 17% of the youth had primary responsibility for financial decisions themselves. About 34% were dependent on their parents. Primarily it was mothers who were financially responsible for children (Case, 2000).

In South Africa, many children are themselves parents. The Case survey showed that just under half (47%) of the youth surveyed had children. The mean age of the young person when the child was born was just under 20 years for women and about 22 years for men. Approximately half (49%) of these women were still at school when their first child was born and one quarter (25%) were unemployed. About 35% of the youth in the survey were single parents. In spite of these challenges, 15% of youth with children were living with their child but were not the main caregiver. This indicates a high level of family support for young parents. However, the responsibility that young people have in the family are exacerbated by the impact of HIV related deaths and the growing number of child-headed households. Although there is little direct information on the impact this phenomenon may have on levels of crime and violence, family support and positive relationships within the family are important resilience factors and are likely to be minimised for these youth. The responsibility that such youth have in the family is also likely to minimise their educational opportunities which will also be discussed as a risk factor in the following section.

Similarly, poverty in South Africa affects the youth and is likely to impact on both their victimisation and perpetration of crime. Census 2001 indicates that 29.5% of the total population are unemployed. This still reflects historical inequality created under apartheid with 28.1% of the black African population reporting being unemployed and 4.1% of the white population reporting being unemployed. Unemployment is particularly severe for black women who showed an unemployment rate of 58% (Statssa, 2003). This is especially concerning given the primary responsibility that women have for supporting young people as indicated in the Case survey above.

Although detailed data on education has not been released from the 2001 census the 1999 October household survey showed that the vast majority of those (between 95% and 97%) between 8 years and 14 years were attending school. However, this decreases rapidly from age 15 years and by 17 years, only 84% of the population are still in school. In addition, it would seem that South African youth progress through school fairly slowly with 25% of those who are 22 years still in school. In addition, few youth go on to obtain tertiary education in South Africa[1] (Statssa, 1999). This has implications for the development of crime prevention projects because school is often a place where young people can be easily accessed and, as will be discussed in the following section, a positive school experience is an important factor that can deter a young person from crime through the sense of self-value as well as employment opportunities it creates. For example, the Case 2000 survey found that 75% of those with a post-matric qualification felt that their level of education helped them to get their current job. The vast majority of youth who had not studied as far as they would have liked to cited a lack of money as the reason (36%) followed by pregnancy (9%) and having to find work (5%).

Levels of youth crime and victimisation are fairly difficult to establish. However, international research does indicate that the age group 15-25 are the most likely to be involved in crime (Sherman, 1998). SAPS information about the numbers of youth that are both victims of crime is difficult to access as the age of the victim and the accused are seldom reported in their summary statistics. However, some indication of levels of youth

crime can be gained from the number of youth serving prison sentences or who are part of diversion programmes. Indeed, the number of children (in this case defined as youth below 18 years) in prison are increasing.[2] Children under 18 years form 1.45% of the prison population and 3% of all unsentenced prisoners (Muntingh, 2001). Perhaps most concerning is the number of young people who are in prison awaiting sentencing. Should sentencing include diversion, the young person may already have spent large amounts of time in prison by this time. These statistics reflect long delays in prosecutions and the lack of alternative sentencing options and diversion options available in South Africa.

The nature of the offences that bring children into contact with the criminal justice system is also worth considering. In 2001, 50.5% of children sentenced to imprisonment were sentenced for property crimes. 30.8% were imprisoned for aggressive offences and 14.5% for sexual offences. Among youth who are diverted from the Criminal Justice System, 8 out of the 10 most common crimes that they had committed were property crimes and victimless offences. Theft and shoplifting formed 60% of the crimes followed by theft and housebreaking. The value of such property crimes was typically less than R200. This indicates that many youth are simply involved in delinquency and petty crime and international best practice shown that tackling these crimes may prevent more serious crime in the future (Sherman, 1998).

Sex offences have received a great deal of media attention in cases where youth have been both the perpetrator and the victim. The number of children sentenced for sex offences is decreasing although the number of children in custody for sex offences is increasing[3] (Redpath, 2002). Children account for 2.3% of all sex offenders. For other crimes, children form 3.5% of the prison population. Children are therefore less likely to commit sex offences than adults. The additional attention given to these offences by the media and community advocacy may be an indication of the perceived severity of sex offences in communities. The 18-30 age groups are responsible for most rapes and contribute more to such crimes than predicted by their population share (Redpath, 2002). Generally, evidence suggests that the number of youth involved in serious crime is very small and most are involved in crimes that would be better suited to diversion programmes and prevention interventions. It is therefore these interventions that will be emphasised in this paper. Sexual assaults against children have also received a great deal of attention. Indeed, CIAS (2003) indicated that rape of children was increasing slightly although it is difficult to determine whether this is an increase in the incidence of child rape or in its reporting.

It is also important to consider the extent to which youth are victims of crime. In the Case 2000 survey, about one-fifth indicated that they had been a victim of crime and the majority of those victimised were in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng. Respondents from urban areas were more likely to have been victims of crime. It would seem that there are racial differences in the way in which crime is perceived and in the sense of threat experienced by youth. White and Indian youth were more likely to report having been a victim of crime. This entirely contradicts the picture of the whole population (Louw, Shaw, Camerer and Robertshaw, 1998) which indicates that black South Africans are most likely to be victims of crime. Most youth indicated that rape was the most severe crime (39%) followed by murder or attempted murder (33%). However, when broken down by gender, women felt that rape was the most serious crime whilst men citied armed robbery and car crime as most serious. Almost all respondents felt that crime had increased (Case, 2000).

2. Risk and resilience

Traditionally, much research has considered the risk factors that predict young people

getting involved in crime. However, more recently there has been an emphasis on resilience factors or, at least, the combination of risk and resilience that influences young peoples' decisions to commit crime. Resilience usually means positive adaptation despite adversity. In other words it is concerned with the successes, social competence, good academic adjustment and sometimes simply the absence of maladjustment in young people in the face of factors that are known to be associated with adjustment problems (Luthar et al, 2000). Risk and resilience has become particularly important as a set of research that can direct interventions in high risk situations. It also involves an important shift towards primary prevention and a focus on the strengths of people in high risk situations rather than their failings.

Understanding risk is important as it shows the experiences that practitioners should most try to reduce in a young person's environment. These factors can roughly be classified into individual factors, family factors, social interaction factors and community factors.

For example, individual risk factors include poor impulse control, low IQ whilst protective factors have included high self efficacy, an internal locus of control and an easy-going temperament (Luthar, 2000). Similarly, gender is a well established risk factor with more boys being involved in crime, conduct disorder than girls. However, girls are more likely to experience irritability, depression, anxiety and mood swings (Barbarin, 1999). Research on individual factors has often been criticised for implying that a young person either has or lacks resilience and for creating the impression that resilience is an innate quality. The problems with this will be discussed in more detail but individual risk factors have at times guided interventions, for example, focussing programmes on boys or creating programmes that promote self-esteem.

Family vulnerabilities that most consistently predict aggression in young people include harsh and inconsistent discipline whilst protective factors include an emotionally responsive and caring family (Luthar et al, 2000). Scott, 1998 identified five aspects of parenting that were associated with anti-social behaviour in youth. These were poor supervision, erratic and harsh punishment, parental disharmony, rejection of the child and a lack of involvement in the child's activities. Children from single parent households have in some cases been found to have more anxiety-depression symptoms, oppositional behaviour, immaturity and difficulties with peers (Barbarin and Soler, 1993). Interventions with families have been popular and will be discussed in the following section.

The nature of a young person's interactions with his/her peers has also been an indicator of later involvement in crime and violence. Research into aggressive behaviour has shown it to be fairly stable over time (Eron, 1998; Scott, 1998). For example, Scott 1998 found that 90% of recidivist juvenile delinquents had shown evidence of conduct disorder as a child. Other research has shown that children who showed high levels of aggression at age 8 were more likely to have been in juvenile courts by age 19 and by age 30 were more likely to have been convicted of crimes, to be abusive to their spouses and to have underachieved educationally (Eron, 1998). Adults who had shown signs of conduct disorder and aggression as youth had problems with alcoholism, drug dependence, theft, violence and had problems in their relationships. This kind of finding highlights the importance of early interventions with young people. In addition, it shows the importance of addressing what may appear to be insignificant levels of aggression and behaviour such as bullying among young children. It is important to recognise (as research has indicated since the 1970s) that the consistency in aggressive behaviour is most likely to reflect continuing instability in the social circumstances of the young person rather than an innate tendency for violence (Olweus, 1979).

Similarly, research on school bullying has suggested that children who are bullies at school may progress to delinquency in later life. Bullying has itself been linked to family risk factors such as a lack of family cohesiveness although this relationship has been contested and it would seem that there are a complex interaction of factors that predict bullying (see Rigby, 1991, Rigby and Slee, 1993). Certainly, warmth and parental attention in the family have been associated with higher levels of self-esteem among children and emotional well-being in young people. Similarly, children involved in aggressive and bullying behaviour are more likely to have low levels of acceptance by their peers. However, this is strongly gendered. For example, girls who engage in more sedentary, social behaviour (such as chatting with peers) are likely to be rated as more popular than their peers. However, for boys, more aggressive behaviours tended to increase their popularity among their peers (Bolton, 1999). Certainly, some researchers (Howard, 1996) have suggested that the higher levels of boys involved in crime and delinquency may be influenced by the different expectations about aggressive behaviour among boys and girls and different ways in which boys and girls are punished for aggression. This has also been linked to the gendered nature of punishment in both homes and schools where boys have often been found to be punished more physically than girls (Howard, 1996). In addition, although early levels of aggression may retrospectively predict an involvement in crime in later life, the vast majority of young people who are involved in aggressive behaviour do not continue to a life of crime.

Exposure to community violence has been associated with a decrease in school performance, substance abuse, emotional disturbances and behavioural problems among young people (Christian and Barbarin, 1999). Research in the United Kingdom has suggested that urban depravation is strongly associated with young people's decision to get involved in gangs and crime (Joseph, 2003). Similarly, poverty has been associated with poorer academic performance, behavioural problems and emotional distress. Recent research indicates that the impact of poverty is more severe when the child experiences chronic poverty or poverty early on in life (Barbarin, 1999). In a comparative study of South African and African American children between age 5 and 6 years, Barbarin (1999) found that South African children living under similar conditions to African American children experienced fewer behavioural problems. It was suggested that this may be a consequence of higher levels of community support for South African children. This kind of research, although less common than research into family or individual factors, is highly relevant to South African youth and shows the importance of economic empowerment and community development programmes as interventions to reduce young people's involvement in crime.

Factors associated with risk and resilience as described above have often been used by policy makers and practitioners in overly simplistic ways and there have been some factors that are assumed to be risk factors without any real evidence for them. This includes the popular notion that people abused as children are themselves more likely to abuse their children (see for example Altemeir, 1982) and the assumption that children in female headed households are more vulnerable (see for example, Barbarin 1999). Where single female parenting is not accompanied by poverty or long working hours by the parent, children are not more likely to engage in crime or violence.

Perhaps the most important caution against oversimplifying notions of resilience is the research finding that vulnerability factors are extremely context specific. For example, high intelligence is usually a protective factor and results in better child outcome. However, where children have few career and academic opportunities it can be a risk factor for increased involvement in crime and violence (Luthar, 2000). It is therefore important that both risk and resilience factors are evaluated within their context.

In addition, it is often the mechanism by which a factor influences resilience rather than that factor per se that needs to be considered. For example, parental mental illness is a predictor of poor child outcomes because it can interfere with parenting behaviours, particularly the expression of affection and the consistency of discipline. It is therefore equally important to consider the mechanisms by which a particular form of adversity leads to crime or violence if we are to avoid implying causal relationships (Luthar, 2000). Similarly, family support was mentioned above as a key resilience factor, especially for youth experiencing very high levels of stress. More detailed research has indicated that this may be because it improves the levels of self-esteem that young people have. This may change the site of intervention as rather than developing parent education programmes, the self-esteem of the child could be promoted through mentoring or classroom based interventions. Along a similar vein, some research indicates that where risk is absent, the effects of extra-curricular activities and positive relationships with adults in the school are not significant. However in high risk situations (for example where there is a great deal of community violence) they have a much more positive effect. This may be because youth living in high risk situations have so few opportunities for positive activities and they therefore respond better to them.

Perhaps one of the dangers of a focus on resilience is that, in popular discourses, it has come to be associated with a trait or set of behaviours that a young person either has or lacks. It is therefore used to blame young people who do not fare well in the face of adversity. Luthar (2000) suggests that resilience can only ever be seen as a process or a relationship between the person and their environment. One should therefore avoid using words like "a child is resilient" or "fostering resilience" as this implies that if only young people had certain traits they would withstand their problems. This shifts the responsibility back onto the young person which is contradictory to the notion of understanding positive outcome.

In addition, the complexity of risk and resilience suggests that it is important to consider the coexistence of risk factors. For example, programmes that foster academic skills or job skills without addressing the emotional state ignores the ways in which the emotional state of a young person may affect their ability to learn. The benefits of clearly conceptualised and more long-term programmes have been clearly shown (see for example Zigler and Styfeo, 1996).

Programmes to prevent youth crime in South Africa need to be as much rooted in history as they are forward looking. The above statistics are evidence of the sustained marginalisation of young people and the continuation of apartheid based systems of inequality. It is therefore, unsurprising that much current crime in South Africa is framed by young perpetrators as a form of social banditry (see Simpson, 2001) aimed at economic redress. The distinction between present day levels of crime and violence and the political violence of the past is, therefore, more blurred than is often portrayed in popular discourse. As Simpson, (2003) notes:

> An analysis of the trajectories of youth violence in South Africa … illustrates very powerfully the slide that was often made by young marginalized men between involvement in political and criminal violence … in fact, the experiences of marginalization and alienation that shaped much of young men's engagement in political organisation and the violence of liberation during the 1970s and 1980s, remains largely unchanged as a source of resilient identity which underpins the involvement of these young men in criminal gangs in the post 1994 period.

3. Effective programmes (local and international)

Some of the risk and resilience factors described above have been instrumental in pointing policy makers and practitioners to key interventions. This section is based on a review by the CSVR of effective youth crime prevention programmes in 2002. It was based on evaluations of projects where possible and compared international best practice and South African best practice. For convenience, interventions aimed at reducing young people's involvement in crime and violence can be categorised into four categories as described below:

3.1 Adequate supervision of young people

These interventions have been used in many diverse contexts with youth of all ages. Based on research that has indicated that youth crime is most likely during the period between school ending and parents returning from work, these approaches try to increase the monitoring of young people. In addition, these projects ensure that youth are not victims of crimes as a result of being unsupervised. Perhaps the most common interventions have been after-school programmes. These programmes have been implemented in a range of settings both before and after school hours. Typically, after school programmes include a wide range of activities such as games and sports, academic assistance etc. They have also been important sites for other crime prevention initiatives such as programmes to promote decision-making skills, self-esteem, drug and alcohol awareness and prevention programmes, assertiveness and confidence building.

After school programmes have the potential to support many single parent families that are required to work long hours. In addition, after school programmes have in some contexts offered food to ensure that youth have at least one meal per day. In the South African context, the lack of state sponsored after school programmes is perhaps the most striking gap. Although early childhood development is being promoted for very young children, all children of school going age need supervision during key times of the day.

Preventing truancy is another key intervention used to ensure that children of school going age are not unsupervised. Truancy is associated with increased gang activity, burglary, substance abuse, vandalism, teenage pregnancy and serious violence later in life (Baker, Sigman and Nugent, 2001). Truancy is likely to have a number of complex causes. Causes within the family may include poverty (which has also been identified as the most common reason for lack of school attendance and leaving school early), and indifferent attitudes to education in the family. School factors include large class sizes, bullying and inconsistent systems for dealing with truancy. Other social factors may include unsafe journeys to or from school, lack of transport or lack of childcare which requires an older sibling to take care of a younger one.

Some local authorities (e.g. in the city of Cape Town) have assisted schools to address some of these causes. This has included ensuring that local government employees are aware of young children in the community that should be in school, a system of referring youth who are truant to appropriate service providers and transporting youth to or from school to ensure they are safe. The expansion and development of such programmes is perhaps most appropriate at local government level with support from existing NGOs and CBOs.

Youth clubs are another mechanism for ensuring that young people are supervised and in a safe environment. They are also a site for implementing other programmes. The South African Association of Youth Clubs was started in 1937 and it aims to provide leisure and

recreation for young people. Their programmes often include leadership and development skills, policy and advocacy work for youth, computer labs etc. In other contexts sports have been integrated into both after school programmes and youth clubs. Although these act independently of government, the support of such cubs (through the provision of municipal facilities and buildings, assistance with specific projects that meet the needs of government departments etc) is a site of potential intervention for government.

3.2 Poverty alleviation

Given the number of youth living in conditions of poverty as described above, it is unsurprising that many programmes in South Africa aim to address this poverty and improve the employment opportunities for young people. Poverty has been discussed above as a factor that can predict involvement in crime and violence and these projects are often innovative and well-tailored to South African needs. The Joint Enrichment Programme (JEP) in South Africa provides young people with technical training, education on the ethic and discipline of work, and aims to restore self-confidence and esteem. Similarly, Junior Achievement South Africa teaches hands on business skills for young people and exposes them to the day–to-day experience of running businesses. At times, these projects have focussed specifically on high risk youth. For example, the Twilight project which works with street children includes among their services teaching craft skills and selling crafts in local markets. This project is run in conjunction with other projects such as family reunification, counselling and provision of basic services such as food and shelter. There are many other similar schemes and the nature of these projects is such that they are often small and tailored to the specific needs of the areas in which they work. This is probably their greatest strength although it makes replication of these projects quite complex.

Perhaps the main weakness of these projects is that few are evaluated in terms of their impact on crime. Because these projects tackle a number of social problems, their aims may not specifically be to reduce crime although, the nature of these projects suggests this is likely. The lack of evaluation is also due to the complexity of the relationship between economic empowerment and crime prevention. Many of these projects are implemented by NGOs and the evaluation and other means of support for these projects could be part of a government initiative to strengthen economic empowerment projects.

3.3 Improving interpersonal skills

A number of programmes both in South Africa and internationally have emphasised the importance of good interpersonal relationships for the reduction of crime and violence. As mentioned above, positive and caring relationships with family, educators and peers are associated with lower involvement by youth in crime and violence.

One of the most common programmes for improving young people's relationships with adults has been mentorship programmes. Mentorship programmes are intended to provide the young person with intensive support and supervision and have been especially effective where young people experience little supportive adult contact. Mentorship addresses some of the identified risk factors for delinquency and youth crime including, an inability to engage in healthy relationships, marginalisation of young people and the prevalence of facilitators such as guns, drugs and alcohol. These risk factors are exacerbated by the number of caregivers who have little time to spend with their children due to their employment commitments (particularly in low income families) and the increasing absence of a support network such as a spouse or an extended family (Reno, Fisher, Robinson and Bilchik, 1998). Similarly, positive relationships with caring adults have been identified as a

factor that promotes the resilience of young people to crime. (Werner and Smith, 1992). One of the common perceptions which have been challenged by research is that the significant adult that children needs in their lives must be their mother. A great deal of research since the 1940s has shown that children need positive relationships with adults who are supportive and caring. Internationally, a variety of people have been used as mentors including emergency service personnel, community volunteers, university students or senior citizens. More recently, peer mentoring has also become common. This usually involves matching an older learner with a younger learner and has already been introduced in a number of South African schools. An evaluation was conducted of eight of the American based 'Big Brothers/Big sisters' and those in the programme were compared with similar youth not in the programme. The results showed that those in the programme were 46% less likely to initiate drug use, were 32% less likely to hit someone, were 52% less likely to skip a day of school and were 27% lea likely to lie to their parents (Grossman and Garry, 1997). Typically, mentorship programmes have been successful with youth between the ages of 10 and 16 years. In South Africa, the average mentoring period is 6 months (Mbambo, 2002). This is less time than mentoring projects in other contexts which usually last at least one year. It therefore indicates the need for more research into the effectiveness of more short-term projects. Mentoring has been used as both a prevention programme and as a component of a diversion programme. As the Child Justice Bill is implemented and mentoring becomes more popular, there may be the need for some formal systems of accountability and monitoring for mentoring projects. This is a role that could potentially be played by a combination of government and NGO stakeholders.

Another international best practice approach also being implemented in South Africa is mediation and conflict resolution programmes. Mediation and conflict resolution is predominantly used in situations where there are already warning signs that conflict could break out. The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) has implemented such programmes in range of settings including schools. These interventions have most commonly been used with youth between the ages of 10 and 20 although Play for Peace undertakes play sessions with younger children that aim to promote tolerance and reduce racism, sexism and xenophobia.

Other key projects have aimed to improve family relationships. Many such programmes include a combination of social and life-skills training for youth as well as parenting skills for parents. In particular, the evidence which suggests the negative impact that harsh, inconsistent discipline and corporal punishment may have of young people's aggressive behaviour makes these interventions important. The content of such programmes may include conflict resolution in the family, information on effective communication, anger management, the importance of setting-limits and the value of praising your child. In other contexts, home visits have been made by professionals to families. Often these begin during pregnancy and continue until the child is about two years old. The professional offers support and provides the mother with information about health, child development, discipline and other topics. For the South African context, these projects could be usefully adapted to meet the needs of child headed households as well as very young parents.

3.3 Addressing youth crime and violence early

One of the programmes internationally that has been used to address youth crime have been those that intervene in gang activities. Gang prevention programmes have taken place on a very small scale based on local neighbourhood needs. Prevention programmes have been identified young people in areas where many gangs operate and have tried to create alternative spaces for these youth such as community centres, after school programmes,

sporting activities, support through mentoring and other activities that can provide an alternative to gang activity. Similarly, community centres have been used to provide services to gang members including conflict resolution, counselling, leadership training and other programmes that may create opportunities for the young person to leave the gang. In South Africa, it is often assumed that young people will not leave lucrative crime for low wage jobs. However, programmes in the USA have achieved success in attracting young people away from gangs by providing skills training and employment placements and enhancing economic opportunities may be a possible future intervention with gangs in South Africa (Henry, Toman and Goman-Smith, 2001).

Preventing gun violence is often linked to gang programmes as described above, although these programmes have typically included more emphasis on counselling and education about the effects of gun violence. These kinds of awareness programmes are notoriously difficult to evaluate and the impact is seldom known. Perhaps the most widely publicised programmes have been gun buy-back programmes. This usually involves financial rewards for handing firearms to police as well as systems for reporting gun violence or illegal gun ownership. Systems for report crimes anonymously are being increasing used by both SAPS and local authorities. Again, the effectiveness of these projects is not well documented.

Perhaps the most common South African intervention for young people involved in crime is diversion programmes. Most diversion programmes include a range of activities including community service, skills development, counselling and mentoring. Victim offender mediation is also used commonly sometimes in conjunction with a diversion programme. With the introduction of the Child Justice Bill, youth diversion has become a central component of youth justice in South Africa and the expansion of such services has been identified as key (Department of Justice 1998). Current evaluations of the Nicro diversion project as well as the work of the Restorative Justice Centre in Mpumalanga have highlighted the success of these projects in keeping young people out of the criminal justice system and prevention their involvement in future crime.

The number of diversions in South Africa has been increasing in recent years and between 1999 and 2000 10500 youth were diverted from the criminal justice system. 75% of these cases are boys and 25% are girls. Most concerning is the number of unemployed youth being sent to diversion programmes which increased from 16-18% between 1999 and 2000. This perhaps indicates a need to include skills training and poverty reduction projects into existing diversion programmes (Muntingh, 2000).

Diversion programmes are not without their difficulties. In particular, there is a lack of resources in some areas, particularly rural areas. Such areas have few probation officers and are located long distances from the community. The roll-out of diversion will need to be flexible to ensure that local conditions are accounted for and this may mean running more intensive but shorter programmes, accommodating school holidays and providing transport (Wood and Ehlers, 2000). In addition, diversion aims to give communities a stake in the rehabilitation of young offenders. This needn't always be positive and in some instances, communities have been excessively punitive or even unwilling to rehabilitate the offender. This highlights the need for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of diversion as section 51 of the Child Justice Bill suggests (Skelton, 2000). Similarly the most effective diversion programmes have been those that impart useful skills to the young person as part of their rehabilitation.

4. Government activities and responsibilities

4.1 Department of Justice

The Department of Justice has been extremely active in its efforts to develop a justice system appropriate for young people. The most significant progress has been made in the development of the Child Justice Bill which was introduced into parliament in August 2002. The Bill was commissioned by the South African Law Commission Juvenile Justice Committee in 1998. The Bill aims to increase the sentencing options for young offenders, it emphasises the importance of assessment by probation officers as well as the creation of special child justice courts (Barberton, 2000). It requires a great deal of collaboration between the Department of Social Development, the Department of Correctional Services and the Department of Justice (Stout, 2000).

The development of this Bill clearly has implications for a range of government departments and service providers. It requires for example extensive training of police (Brey, 2000), probation officers and social workers if it is to be properly implemented. For example, research into the training needs and challenges to the implementation of the Bill in the Free State suggests that that arrested youth are being detained in prison cells in spite of being first time offenders, that youth are in prison for extended periods of time, that police tend to treat youth harshly and at times don't notify a social workers or probation officer about the arrest of a minor (Steyn and Foster, 2000). University courses that train probation officers and corrections officers have been reorganised to provide better training of these professionals given the central role that they will play in implementing the Bill and the North West Department of Social Services have begun training of SAPS, prosecutors, social workers and probation officers (Article 40, 2002).

As discussed briefly above, the provision of diversion has perhaps presents one of the most significant challenges to the implementation of the Child Justice Bill. Progress has been made in developing the capacity of existing diversion projects and projects with the potential to play a role in diversion have been identified. These include life-skills programmes, mentorship programmes wilderness/adventure programmes, skills training and counselling programmes (Mbambo, 2002). Many of these have been discussed in the preceding section. In spite of this, there are several areas in which no diversion programmes exist and this presents a challenge to equitable service delivery (Steyn and Foster, 2000). Similarly, in some parts of the Free State, secure care facilities are not available. Many facilities also face severe overcrowding (Steyn and Foster, 2000).

Although several challenges face the implementation of the Child Justice Bill, a great deal of preparation has been taking place by both Government and NGOs and the principles underlying the Bill create a favourable environment for emphasising the prevention of crime among young people as opposed to law enforcement interventions only.

4.2 Department of Education

The Department of Education has been progressive in recognising its role in crime prevention among youth. This is important because of the success of some basing some of the projects described above in schools and because schools represent a key place where young people can be accessed.

As part of the Department of Educations Tirisano (working together) project they produced a book on school safety in 2002 in conjunction with the SAPS. This reflects the awareness

that the Department has about the need for collaborative work as well as their involvement in the prevention of crime. It also shows an awareness of the need for safety in schools in order to facilitate learning.

In addition to safety within the school, several safe schools projects have been implemented, usually by NGOs or schools themselves in order to prevent young people being exposed to crime and violence in the school. These projects have varying levels of support from the Department of Education. Almost all of the projects described in the above section would require support from the Department of Education.

4.3 Department of Social Development

The Department of Social Development has a key role to play in crime prevention as discussed in this paper. Many of the programmes that seem to be successful in preventing crime are development projects and therefore could fall within their mandate. Perhaps those most related to the mandate of the Department of Social Development are the economic empowerment programmes. The successful implementation of the Child Justice Bill also requires the collaboration of the Department of Social Development. Thus far, the department has created a new registration board for probation officers that they are all required to register with. In addition, the importance of the assessments made by probation officers on the risk the offender poses, their responsiveness to interventions and their special needs speaks to the need for training that is in line with the principles of the Bill. Indeed some of this has begun with the new courses offered at Fort Hare and Rhodes Universities from 2000 as well as in the Free State province as mentioned above. Similarly, the Department of Social Development has taken the lead in the provision of diversion services in Mpumalanga province.

4.4 Tiers of government

Although national departments play a central role in creating an enabling environment for youth crime prevention programmes, implementation requires a great deal more intersection. In particular, local authorities have closer contact with communities and knowledge of local conditions that can facilitate the implementation of such projects.

Many of the projects that have been successful internationally have been implemented in various forms by NGOs. This often means that they are fairly small scale and support for the expansion of these projects may be a central role for government departments. To some extent this may simply involve recognising that existing activities are crime prevention and monitoring their impact.

Notes:

[1] In 1999 attendance at post-secondary school institutions was only 288 000.

[2] Between 1998 and 1999, the number of youth in prison increased by 32.7%. The majority of these were between 16 and 17 years old (Muntingh, 2000) . In 2001, the numbers of children serving prison sentences had more than doubled since 1995 (Muntingh 2001). Between January 1995 and July 2000, the number of children serving sentence has increased by 158.67%.

[3] In March 2001, there were 211 children in custody that had been sentenced for sex offences and 314 who were unsentenced.

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