Resources to Address Youth Violence

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Author

Kirsten Chaplin

Introduction

As a member-driven organization, Peace in Our Cities is continuously working to meet the needs and requests of partner cities and organizations. In early 2025, members articulated a need for 'one-stop shop' resource guides on two topical areas: the prevention of Gender Based Violence and Youth Violence. The guide below is our effort to respond to those requests. This guide should not be taken as comprehensive. Rather, it is offered as a starting place to explore good practice from both PiOC partner cities and cities outside of the network, as well as up-to-date research and publication guides. The Peace in Our Cities Secretariat is here to help any member - existing or aspiring - in thinking through the relevance of materials in this guide, as well as offering direct connections or introductions to those carrying out research, administering programs or otherwise. Finally, because learning and improving happens continuously, these guides will be updated with some regularity. If you have or know of work that should be included in a future iteration of this guide, please send it to us at info@ peaceinourcities.org or to any of the Secretariat members independently.

Background

Youth violence is an increasingly urgent global issue that threatens the stability and well-being of communities worldwide. The World Health Organization defines youth violence as "violence that occurs among individuals aged 10-29 who are unrelated and who may or may not know each other."[1] It typically occurs outside the home, and includes a range of acts such as bullying, assault, gang-related violence, and homicide. [2]

Globally, youth aged 15 to 29 account for more than 40% of all homicide victims, with millions more affected by nonfatal violent crimes.[3] Such exposure to violence during childhood and adolescence can lead to severe and lasting physical, psychological, and social consequences for individuals and their families, while also generating substantial costs for society.[4] While youth violence is a global concern, its consequences are especially pronounced in cities, where population density and social disparities often exacerbate the risks. As more young people migrate to cities in search of opportunity, it is increasingly important to address the heightened

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1   World Health Organization, (2024, October 31). Youth violence. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence.
2   World Health Organization (2024) [see footnote 1]
3   The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, UChicago Urban Labs, & The World Bank Group, (2016). Reducing Urban Violence and Improving Youth Outcomes in the Americas. Action Tour Report. https://globalaffairs.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/reducing-urban-violence_161207.pdf.
4   U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.). Preventing Youth Violence. https://www.cdc.gov/youth-violence/prevention/index.html.; Seal, D., Nguyen, A., & Beyer, K. (2014). Youth exposure to violence in an urban setting. Urban studies research, 2014(1), 368047. http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2014/368047.; World Health Organization (2024) [see footnote 1]; The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, The University of Chicago Urban Labs, & The World Bank Group, (2016). Reducing Urban Violence and Improving Youth Outcomes in the Americas. Action Tour Report. https://globalaffairs.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/reducing-urban-violence_161207.pdf.; World Health Organization, (2015). Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence. https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/181008/9789241509251_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

risks they face in these environments.[5]

Evidence shows that youth violence is preventable. A comprehensive approach, addressing root causes, while also promoting safety, accountability, equity, and opportunity, can prevent violence and mitigate its effects.[6] This brief is intended to help Peace in Our Cities partners find high quality resources related to youth violence prevention. Namely, the brief highlights successful strategies to prevent violence through the work of specific organizations, programs, and research with examples from around the world. This list is in no way comprehensive, but represents a good starting place with more resource support available from the PiOC team at any time.

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5   Pavanello, S., Metcalfe, V., & Martin, E. (2012). Survival in the city: Youth, displacement and violence in urban settings. Humanitarian Policy Group. HPG Policy Brief 44. https://media.odi.org/documents/7627.pdf.
6   Pan American Health Organization, (n.d.). Youth Violence. https://www.paho.org/en/topics/youth-violence.; World Health Organization (2024) [see footnote 1]

PiOC Partners Examples

Peace and Opportunities Strategy (PAZOS) in Palmira, Colombia
OSFProject Description, *OPSI Case Study*, *Prevention Strategy (in Spanish)*, *Video*, *2022 Program Evaluation*
PAZOS was a program for youth aged 14-29 that uses elements of interruption, intervention, prevention, safe environments, and access to justice, to reduce violence in Palmira, Colombia. It integrated a focus on root causes of youth violence into the municipal security policy, using tools such as sports and art, psychosocial support, and workforce development opportunities.

Empire Fighting Chance in Bristol, England
Intervention Overview, *2023 Impact Report*, *Website*, *Video*
The Empire Fighting Chance combines no-contact boxing with psychologically informed support to disrupt cycles of violence in youth aged 8 to 25 years old. It combines sports with a focus of conflict prevention through dialogue and negotiation, while providing youth with mentorship to disrupt individual patterns of violence.

En La Buena in Cali, Colombia
Program Highlight, *PiOC Page*
The En la Buena Program, launched by the Office of the Mayor of Cali in partnership with a local NGO, Propacífico, aims to reduce violence among youth in Santiago de Cali. By focusing on high-risk areas, this initiative works closely with community leaders to engage youth particularly vulnerable to violence. With 30 trained community leaders, that collaborate with the city's psychosocial teams, En la Buena reaches 900 high-risk youth to mediates conflict, encourage
constructive use of free time through cultural and sports activities, and support emotional well-being.

Building on Time in Community in Peñalolen, Chile
Intervention Overview, *2006-2009 Evaluation*,*News Article*
The Building TIme in Community is part of the city's Public Safety Plan and focuses on preventing violence among young people in Peñalolen through community sports, cultural, and recreational activities. The initiative aims to foster youth community participation, development, and well-being, through the creation of safe spaces to engage in activities.

Evidence Platforms, Literature Reviews & Program Repositories

Urban Institute Research Report on Implementing Youth Violence Reduction Strategies
Report
This report evaluates 14 interventions aimed at reducing youth violence in communities across the U.S.A. with the aim of highlighting aspects that are critical to successful implementation. The report emphasizes aspects such as community engagement, partnerships, flexible eligibility criteria, credible messengers, and relationships with law enforcement, to be critical components of program success.

Youth Violence Interactive Website
Website

This interactive website offers global and country-specific insights into various types of violence. It features user-friendly infographics, links to measurement tools and research on prevalence, consequences, risk factors and prevention and response strategies.

Evidence Platform for Youth Violence Prevention
Website (in Spanish)

This platform offers evidence on various types of youth violence prevention programs. For each thematic area, it offers a brief description of effectiveness and highlights specific programs implemented in countries around the world.

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development
Website

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development is a resource that identifies and evaluates evidence-based programs designed to promote positive youth development and prevent violence, delinquency, and substance use. The website offers a searchable database of interventions that have been reviewed and certified based on their effectiveness.

Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit
Online Toolkit

This toolkit summarizes strategies to prevent youth violence, highlighting a wide range of approaches, from nutrition and sports programs to policing interventions. For each strategy, it provides insights into its effectiveness, estimated costs, and links to relevant resources and programs.

What Works in Youth Violence Prevention (USA)
Literature Review

This literature review presents evaluations using quasi-experimental or experimental research designs to identify interventions that significantly reduced youth physical or sexual violence. Programs identified varied in target age, content, strategies, and duration, targeting factors across individual, peer, school, family, and community levels.

Youth Violence Reduction Strategies (USA)
Literature Review

This report reviews 14 violence reduction initiatives across the U.S., analyzing their intervention designs and structures while highlighting strategies considered effective by program staff and partners. Detailed intervention profiles are provided in the appendix of this report.

Strategies to Prevent Urban Youth Violence
Report

This report provides a comprehensive review of violence reduction strategies utilized by the federal government, states, and cities to address serious youth violence among high-risk older youth ages 14-24, particularly for gun and knife violence. While the majority of the report focuses on the United States, the appendix includes international programs and strategies, outlining their intervention components and target populations.

Guidebooks & Toolkits

Positive Youth Development
Measurement Toolkit, Approach Overview
This is a practical guide for implementing programs using Positive Youth Development, an approach designed to build and support the competencies, skills, and abilities of young people, empowering them to reach their full potential.

USAID Youth Violence Prevention eLearning Module[7]
Course
This course presents research information and practical guidance to orient USAID field staff to plan, implement, and evaluate efforts to prevent or reduce youth and community-based violence.

Trenton Youth Safety Playbook (New Jersey, USA)
Guidebook
This guidebook offers comprehensive resources and guidance for implementing programs aimed at reducing youth violence, outlining key strategies across prevention, intervention, enforcement, and re-entry, each supported by specific examples from across the U.S.

CDC Youth Violence Prevention Resource for Action (USA)
Guidebook
This resource outlines evidence-based strategies to support communities and states in preventing youth violence and mitigating its consequences. Key approaches include fostering supportive family environments, providing high-quality early education, strengthening youth skills, connecting young people with caring adults and positive activities, creating safe and protective community settings, and intervening early to reduce harm and prevent future risks.

Crime & Violence Prevention in LAC Field Guide
Field Guide
This guide is designed to support practitioners in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region working on crime and violence prevention initiatives. It offers a comprehensive conceptual framework that situates crime and violence within broader security systems, presents an overview of evidence-based interventions, and provides practical tools and guidance for designing, implementing, measuring, and evaluating prevention projects.

Youth Participation in Urban Governance through City Youth Councils Guidebook
Guidebook
This report explores the structure, roles, and impact of city youth councils as platforms for youth engagement in policy making. It offers recommendations and evidence-based best practices to support their establishment and effective implementation.

Police-Youth Dialogues Toolkit
Toolkit
This toolkit draws on successful strategies from police/youth projects across the United States, documenting best practices, strategies and easily implementable activities.

Reducing Youth Gun and Gang/ Group Violence Practice Guide
Guide
This practice guide is intended for stakeholders in local government, law enforcement, and

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7   Note this course may be removed due to broader USAID funding reductions.

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community violence interventions with the goal of reducing youth gun violence in relation to gangs or community groups. It offers recommendations for building antiviolence infrastructure and building effective programs and interventions.

Diagnosis & Analysis

Understanding Youth Exposure to Violence in the U.S.
Research Article
This research examines the various forms of violence experienced by youth, their responses to it, and their perceptions of its causes and consequences. It provides insights into the critical role of youth perspectives in shaping effective violence prevention strategies and offers intervention recommendations at the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels.

Rethinking Youth Violence in Africa
Blog post
This blog post examines youth violence in Africa by critically analyzing dominant narratives and advocating for a systems-based approach to understand and address it.

Urban Youth Violence in Africa
Research Brief
This brief offers an overview of the issue of urban youth violence across Africa, followed by an analysis of case studies from several countries. It examines the root causes and contributing factors unique to different urban contexts, and concludes with proposed solutions aimed at preventing and reducing urban youth violence across the continent.

Violence Among Young People in Cairo
Research Report
This study examines the prevalence, drivers, and impacts of youth violence in Cairo, identifying both perpetrators and victims while analyzing gendered experiences and youth responses. It also outlines the methodologies used to survey young people in urban poor areas.

Youth Violence in South Africa
Book
This book examines youth violence in South Africa by exploring its root causes, the country's social and historical context, and various intervention strategies aimed at prevention and response. Chapter twelve specifically focuses on addressing youth violence in urban settings.

Preventing Youth Violence in Central America
Research Report
This paper examines the landscape of violence across the Central American region, focusing on the root causes and risk factors affecting youth as both victims and perpetrators. It outlines nine policy recommendations for a comprehensive approach to youth violence prevention, organized into primary, secondary and tertiary prevention strategies.

Reducing Urban Violence and Improving Youth Outcomes in LAC
Conference Takeaways
This report outlines key takeaways from a convening of leaders and offers recommendations to strengthen urban public safety and improve the lives of youth in cities in the Americas. Topics include cross-sector partnerships, using data to build safer cities and scale initiatives, engage older youth, policing and security, and resilient cities.

Roadmap to Address Armed and Urban Violence in LAC
Report
This report provides an overview of how urban and armed violence affects children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. It analyzes data availability in 10 countries and highlights regional programs and best practices aimed at reducing such violence.

Crime & Violence Prevention for High-Risk Youth in LAC
Webinar
This webinar focuses on crime and violence prevention strategies for high-risk youth in the LAC region, with an emphasis on tertiary interventions aimed at those already involved in or most vulnerable to violence.

Interrupting the Cycle of Youth Violence
Webinar
This webinar explores the vital role of street outreach workers, messengers, violence interrupters and other youth advocates as credible and authentic actors in interrupting the cycle of youth violence. It highlights how these individuals contribute to comprehensive, community-led efforts to prevent and de-escalate violence.

Healthy Communities for Youth
Cost Analysis
This study presents a cost analysis of the Healthy Communities for Youth program, aimed at preventing youth violence in economically marginalized urban communities. This analysis is intended to inform policymaking and assess the affordability of a community-level program in resource-limited urban communities.

Community Violence Intervention Programs Explained
Research Report
This report explores community violence intervention programs, emphasizing the importance of building trust and relationships with individuals most impacted by gun violence. It highlights the critical role of violence interrupters and neighborhood change agents in reducing homicides and shootings, and presents several successful intervention models.

Urban Youth Trauma
Book
This book examines the roots of urban youth trauma, offering contextual background and presenting intervention strategies that build on community assets.

Youth Unemployment as a Security and Development Challenge
Research Report
This article discusses how limited employment opportunities for youth, particularly in cities, poses a major security and development challenge, and advocates for strategies that leverage youth potential to drive economic growth and job creation.

Bringing Hope to Young People in African Cities
Blog post
This post argues that youth in Africa often engage in violence for reasons beyond unemployment, including perceived injustice, corruption and discrimination. It outlines key strategies for moving forward, including placing data at the center of interventions, expanding the focus beyond employment, and fostering cross-sector partnerships.

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Youth & Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence
Report

This report draws on data from interviews and surveys with youth in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Somalia to examine the primary drivers of political violence. It finds that participation in violence is not primarily driven by poverty or unemployment, but by feelings of anger stemming from experiences of injustice, discrimination, corruption, and abuse by security forces.

The Role of Education and Youth in Preventing Urban Violence
Round Table Report

This report summarizes a round table discussion on the intersection of education, youth, urban violence and violent extremism. Session 3 specifically focuses on the role of education in preventing youth involvement in urban violence and crime, exploring both its potential for peacebuilding and its limitations.

Education to Reduce Urban Violence in South Africa
Research Report

This report examines the role of education as a tool to prevent youth involvement in urban violence in South Africa. It begins by outlining the context of urban violence and the education space in South Africa, then explores the characteristics of both formal and non-formal education interventions aimed at addressing specific risk factors for violence.

Programs & Policies

Public Policy

Programs & Partnerships in 30 American Cities
Research Review

This report presents strategies from 30 U.S. cities aimed at reducing youth violence, outlining each city's approach and highlighting key activities, practices, and partnerships. This tool is designed to support mayors, police chiefs, and school administrators across the US who are committed to reducing youth violence in their cities.

Minority Youth Violence Prevention Initiative
Program Website, *Program Guide*

This program is designed to link public health agencies, community groups, and law enforcement agencies in an effort to curb violence and reduce disparities in access to public health among at-risk minority youth. This webpage offers short summaries and podcasts describing successful programs of this initiative across the United States.

Civic Engagement

Strengthening Youth Engagement in Civic Processes in Zimbabwe
Program Summary, *Video*

This project combines action research, capacity building, and advocacy to actively engage youth in civil and policy processes, addressing their exclusion that has contributed to instances of youth-led protests and violence. The research component aims to explore how meaningful youth participation can strengthen governance and promote more inclusive and peaceful development outcomes.

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Youth Civic Engagement in Jordan
Program Overview, *Website*

The Youth Civic Action Academy was developed by the Strong Cities Network to prevent youth involvement in extremist groups and violence in cities in Jordan. The academy equips young leaders with the tools, skills, and agency to actively participate in driving change, addressing the gap in youth representation within decision-making spaces and processes.

Community Engagement & Outreach

Youth Engagement Strategies in Baltimore
News Article, *Mayor's Office Plans*

Baltimore's Youth Safety Engagement Strategy directs violence intervention partners to engage youth during school breaks through outreach and structured activities and opportunities. The strategy is supported through partnerships with various community organizations.

Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development
Website, *Evaluation*

The City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development is a comprehensive, community-centered response to gang violence that operates in 23 designated zones across the city. It coordinates a range of evidence-based services, including community engagement initiatives, targeted gang prevention and intervention services, and street-based violence interruption strategies.

Reducing Youth Violence in Boston
Video

In this video, Rev. Jeffrey Brown shares how he contributed to reducing violence by listening to youth and empowering them to lead change in their communities.

Sports

Sports Programs in England
Implementation Resource, *Theory of Change*

This resource provides practical guidance on implementing sports programs aimed at reducing young people's risk of involvement in violence. The theory of change explains how and why sport can positively impact vulnerable young people in the context of serious youth violence.

Line Up Live Up
Program Report, *Video*, *Webinar*, *Mini Documentary*

The "Line Up Live Up" program, from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is a sports-based life skills training program that equips youth with tools to resist crime and drug use through interactive exercises led by coaches and educators. It has been implemented in 14 countries as part of the Doha Declaration Global Programme.

Sports Against Crime Outreach - Resilience - Empowerment (SC:ORE)
Program Overview, *Key Objectives*, *Launch Video*

SC:ORE is a joint initiative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Olympic Committee, aimed at preventing youth violence and crime through the power of sport. It utilizes sport as a tool for prevention, promotes multi sectoral partnerships, and builds a knowledge base for evidence-based programming.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy & Trauma

Sustainable Transformation for Youth in Liberia
Video, *Program Evaluation*, *Policy Memo*
The Sustainable Transformation of Youth in Liberia is a short-term cognitive behavioral therapy program aimed at reducing criminality and other destructive behaviors among high-risk young men in Liberia.

Becoming a Man
Evaluation, *Report Brief*, *Website*
Becoming a Man is an evidence-based social-cognitive skills program designed to improve educational outcomes and prevent youth involvement in violence.

Policing & Gun Violence

Empowering Youth, Strengthening Trust
Podcast
This episode examines a collaborative initiative intended to foster constructive youth-police engagement and support youth-led community development efforts in Lisbon, Portugal.

Workforce Development

Safe and Inclusive Cities for Youth
Report, *Program Description*, *Video (Kenya)*
This report examines evidence collected as part of the evaluation of Plan International's Safe and Inclusive Cities program in major cities across Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. This program is for youth ages 15 to 29 living in informal settlements and intends to address the root causes of urban fragility through targeted violence reduction and strengthening young people's skills and employment potential.

Fundación Reintegra in Mexico
Organization Overview, *Website*
Fundación Reintegra works to create alternative pathways for at-risk youth in violent, under-resourced communities in Mexico City. Its program is structured in three stages, each aimed at developing practical skills and fostering entrepreneurship while fostering personal reflection, goal setting, strategic planning, and the cultivation of a strong sense of community and individual accomplishment.

Education

Open Schools Program
Program Overview, *Implementation Guide*
The Open Schools Program was launched in Brazil as a response to youth violence and underlying risk factors. By leveraging the physical infrastructure of schools, the program transforms them into community spaces that offer recreational, informational, and vocational activities. This model has since been adapted in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

MultiMediando Program
Program Overview, YouTube Channel
MultiMediando is a transmedia platform that empowers children aged 8 to 13 to promote a culture of peace through peer mediation tools in Quito, Ecuador. The project fosters youth engagement using innovative, multimedia approaches.

Kingston YMCA Youth Development Program
Website, Evaluation
The Kingston YMCA Youth Development Programme supports at-risk, low-income boys aged 14–17 in urban Kingston, Jamaica through daily programming that provides remedial education, vocational training, life skills development, and behavior support. Designed for adolescents not attending school due to academic or behavioral challenges, the program prepares them to reenter formal education after achieving proficiency on the Grade 9 Achievement Test.

Cape Kids Foundation
Website, Video
Cape Kids Foundation is a trauma-aware nonprofit based in Cape Town that provides youth with holistic, wrap-around support, including emotional counseling, social mentorship, best-fit schooling, and residential care, to foster resilience and academic success. Its program also offers extracurricular activities, medical assistance, and life-skills workshops to prepare students for stable, independent lives.

Step NOW UK
Website
Step NOW UK is a youth-led organization that supports young people facing social barriers through mentoring, community programs, and tailored services, aiming to steer them toward opportunities that reduce poverty, unemployment, crime, and violence.