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The Implications of Urban Violence for the Design of Social Investment Funds: A Case Study from the Jamaican SIF

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INTRODUCTION

In cities throughout the world, local populations increasingly experience the daily effects of escalating levels of violence and crime. A recently completed World Bank study on poor urban communities in cities in four continents, for instance, shows that the poor perceive that intensifying violence and crime-attributed to increasing unemployment, particularly among young men and growing drug and alcohol abuse-are threatening personal safety, access to jobs and the sustainability of community based organizations.

Violence is now recognized as an important economic and social development issue-rather than just a serious problem of social pathology. Costs of violence can range from low investor confidence; higher health and police costs; the disaffection and migration of the urban middle class; higher mortality and morbidity rates; reduced access to social services; dysfunctional families; and deeper oppression of women, to the breakdown of community spirit and participation, and the substitution of a climate of fear among neighbors.

While comprehensive strategies to reduce and prevent violence are a preoccupation for governments, so too are the implications of violence for the design of ongoing community based poverty reduction and urban service delivery programs. This issue has, however, received little attention to date. This note aims to contribute to increased understanding of this issue. It provides a brief summary of a recently completed participatory study of urban poverty and violence in Jamaica and highlights the way in which it influenced the design of a new poverty reduction intervention-the Jamaican Social Investment Fund.

POVERTY REDUCTION IN JAMAICA AND THE SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND

Despite several years of economic stabilization policies, Jamaica continues to face a challenging economic and social environment characterized by low growth and high interest rates, widening external imbalances and a fragile financial sector. With growth insufficient to raise the living standards of the population over the past decade, about 28 percent of the population continue to live below the poverty line. Although 60 percent of the poor live in rural areas, the urban poor though fewer in number, are arguably more vulnerable to changes in the economic environment as they are more fully integrated into the monetarized economy and have fewer resources upon which to draw.

Along with its continuing priority to improve macroeconomic performance, the Government of Jamaica has placed social development and poverty reduction at the center of its medium-term framework. A recently approved

National Poverty Eradication Program emphasizes community-based interventions undertaken in partnership with NGOs, the private sector and communities themselves. Recognizing the limited capacity of existing government institutions to catalyze small-scale projects at the community level, the Government in August 1996 established the Jamaican Social Investment Fund (JSIF). Its primary goal is to contribute to poverty reduction and help create an environment for sustainable national development.

The JSIF is designed to assist Government in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable groups currently underserved by existing programs and institutional mechanisms in three ways; first, by establishing an efficient, demand-driven and complementary mechanism to deliver basic services and infrastructure to the poor; second, by mobilizing and channeling additional resources to the areas of basic social and economic infrastructure and social services; and third, increasing national institutional capacity to identify, design, implement, manage and sustain small-scale community-based projects.

URBAN VIOLENCE IN JAMAICA AND ITS EROSION OF THE POOR'S ASSETS

Research Objectives

Widespread violence and crime is now recognized as a serious island-wide problem in Jamaica. Its impact is felt at all levels of society. Because of its importance as a contributory factor to urban poverty, a study of urban poverty and violence was undertaken during the preparation phase of the JSIF to contribute to project design.^{1/} The study also provided the analytical framework and data for the World Bank's Jamaica Urban Poverty Study (World Bank, 1996). To incorporate the rarely-heard voices of the urban poor in project design, the study used a Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) methodology, with fieldwork undertaken in five poor urban areas. These were selected as broadly representative of a range of poor community types found in urban Jamaica. Given the highly sensitive nature of the research topic, anonymity of communities was guaranteed with pseudonyms used throughout. Through the participation of poor communities in the PUA process, the specific objective of the study was to identify and understand local community perceptions of different aspects of violence. These included the causes of violence; interrelationship between violence and poverty; impact of violence on employment, economic and social infrastructure and local social institutions; and finally, perceived means by which government, communities, households and individuals can work to reduce violence.

Types of Urban Violence

The PUA did not *a priori* define violence as a problem, but sought to identify the extent to which communities themselves perceived it as a problem. Most communities perceive themselves to be at war-the reality of their daily lives expressed through their language. Twenty-five distinct, self-defined, types of violence were described and analyzed by focus groups, dramatically illustrating the complexity of violence. These were aggregated into six main categories, each with differences in terms of history, gravity and community impact.

Political violence: This type of violence, perceived to have started when politicians introduced guns into the areas, seems to be declining in importance, primarily occurring as a seasonal election-related phenomenon.

Drug violence: Communities distinguished between *ganja*, a herb which they perceive reduces violence, and cocaine, a drug which has exacerbated violence since its introduction in the mid-1980s. High school drop-outs are targeted by the drug dealers to sell drugs.

Gang violence: Currently this is perceived to be the most serious type of violence contributing to a virtual war situation in three of the five communities studied. It pervades all aspects of community life and restricts mobility within the area. Gangs are often formed by educated youth-for whom guns are easily available-to bring 'respect'.

Economic violence: Communities perceive a strong relationship between economic insecurity - lack of the economic means to survive-and violent crimes and burglaries.

Inter-personal violence: Given its pervasiveness, inter-personal violence dominates daily life in poor urban communities. Petty inter-personal arguments often escalate to 'matey war' (women fighting over men), 'pickney war' (adults fighting over children), or 'tenant war', with conflicts exacerbated by a revenge cycle, frequently

played out between rival gangs.

Domestic violence: Physical abuse of women and children is perceived as a common widespread occurrence in daily life. On some occasions, participants felt it was justified, while at other times they condemned it as gratuitous and without reason.

Overall, gang violence were perceived as the most serious type of violence, followed by rape (domestic) and drug violence. Interpersonal violence, while most prevalent was perceived as least serious by participants. Important gender differences were identified; gang, economic and political war primarily involved men, inter-personal violence involved women, and domestic violence was perpetuated mainly by men on women. The serious impact of all types of violence on children was recognized. Police brutality was perceived as a serious problem rather than as a form of violence within the community itself.

Urban Poverty, Vulnerability and the Erosion of Assets

The causal interrelationships that produce and reproduce violence in urban poor communities in Jamaica are best understood in terms of a violence-poverty-social institution nexus. Poor people's perceptions of poverty are based less on static, fixed income measurements, captured by poverty lines, and more on their vulnerability. These include such aspects of 'well-being' as survival, security and self-respect at individual, household and community level. The study graphically illustrates how violence increases the vulnerability of the poor, and constrains them from participating effectively in the broader economy. Vulnerability is closely linked to asset ownership. The more assets individuals, households and communities have, the less vulnerable they are. The greater the erosion of their assets, the greater their vulnerability - with a simple classification of assets including labor, human capital, productive assets such as housing, human relations and social capital (Moser, 1996) Increasing levels of violence, therefore, are a particular preoccupation of the urban poor.

Violence erodes labor as an asset when it reduces access to jobs. In Kingston, bus lines no longer enter many drug and gang-ridden dangerous poor areas because drivers fear for their personal safety. Reduced mobility has critical implications for access and choice of jobs and economic opportunities.

"Area stigma" resulting from violence makes employers reluctant to hire workers from particular areas. Workers from poor areas with reputations for high levels of violence, have particular problems getting jobs and universally perceive themselves to be discriminated against because of where they live.

While unemployment itself can lead to greater levels of violence, causality differs by gender. For example, young men perceive that unemployment leads to frustration and idleness-in turn leading to increased gang violence, interpersonal conflict and domestic violence. Young women perceive unemployment leads them to greater dependency on men as a survival strategy, which in turn increases domestic violence.

Violence erodes **human capital** when it reduces or limits access to education and health facilities by both users and providers. Schools and vocational training centers in neighborhoods riddled with gang violence close early when levels of tension are high-so that children do not get caught in cross-fire-and sometimes do not open at all.

Violence erodes **household relations** as an asset, when it reduces the capacity of households to effectively function as a unit. Women identify a direct link between declining male earnings and increased domestic violence often associated with alcohol and drug abuse. While separation reduces violence, it also means households have fewer assets to call on. Gang war means 'baby fathers' cannot always visit their baby mother, living in rival communities, with negative implications for family life.

Violence erodes **productive assets** such as housing when gang violence prevents the installation or maintenance of housing-related infrastructure such as water, electricity and telephones. In some cases violence is associated with vandalism of water and telephone installations.

Finally, and of great importance, violence erodes **social capital** ^{2/} when it reduces trust and cooperation between community level social organizations and households. In Kingston as well as other cities in Jamaica, complex reciprocities based on horizontal relationships exist-inter-household trust and collaboration are the bread and butter

of coping strategies. However, restricted mobility exacerbates 'matey' war between women competing for the limited number of men given the tight boundaries associated with gang warfare. In addition, 'tenant' wars increase between neighbors living in high-density housing when violence makes it dangerous to leave their yards. Both erode basic forms of reciprocity around shared food, childcare and cash loans.

Some demand-driven social institutions run by community members exist. These have provided space for association, and created horizontal linkages between individuals and groups. They have tended to relate to music or football and other sports, but more recently, have extended to include such programs as teen homework clubs and better parenting projects. Gang war however, severely restricts mobility for social interaction, eroding space for community association. In many areas dance halls, youth clubs and sports facilities—all important social institutions for building up trust and social cohesion among the youth—no longer function because of levels of violence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DESIGN OF THE JAMAICAN SOCIAL FUND

The design of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund provided an opportunity to use different entry points within the project to address issues raised by the PUA. In particular, four key features of the JSIF, including the subproject menu and key procedures within the subproject cycle, were designed both to ensure as far as possible that social capital was not further eroded, as well as to try to build on existing 'stocks' to consolidate social capital in poor communities.

1. Menu of Eligible Subprojects

Critical needs identified by the communities for priority interventions formed the basis for recommending the development of a more diversified menu of subprojects than that funded by social funds in most other countries.

Consequently, the JSIF menu includes typical investments designed to increase human capital and the use of productive assets found in other social funds such as:

- rehabilitation and equipping of schools, health and daycare centers;
- rehabilitation of water and sewage systems and of drains and canals; and
- upgrading of urban access roads.

In addition, however, the menu incorporates the following more innovative interventions that aim to 'build' social capital by providing support, training, space and opportunities for people to build up trust and collaboration within communities. These include:

- rehabilitation and equipping of "integrated community spaces", which include sports facilities, teen centers and training facilities;
- conflict resolution programs;
- drug abuse counseling;
- family-life education and parenting courses;
- career guidance and job placement services; and
- skills training.

2. Eligible Subproject Sponsors

The study noted the importance of community-level institutions for social cohesion and economic development and recognized that the relationship between poverty and violence is mediated through informal as well as formal institutions. It also distinguished between hierarchical and horizontally-based institutions. These observations are reflected in the following features:

- a. In order to build on existing stocks of social capital, the JSIF seeks to work with already established community-level institutions rather than creating new "project committees" as undertaken in some social funds.
- b. In order to restrict the influence of individual-led, hierarchical institutions which favor top-down delivery of

services, individuals cannot sponsor subprojects. All subprojects, therefore, must be sponsored by a community group or with the active participation of the community in the identification of the project.

c. To be as inclusive as possible and not restrict informal associations from participating in the JSIF, subproject sponsors need not be legally-registered entities. Their responsibilities at all stages of the subproject cycle are matched to their capabilities.

d. To help provide the means for sponsors to undertake these roles, the subproject menu includes technical assistance and training of sponsors and executing agencies to upgrade their skills in the preparation, implementation and management of community projects.

3. Subproject Identification and Appraisal

The study also noted that beyond the types of interventions funded, the delivery process itself is critical to building social capital. To legitimize the centrality of communities throughout the process, the JSIF objectives state that communities must be involved in the identification of subprojects. To facilitate this, the JSIF will train interested non-governmental organizations and central and local government entities in the latest participatory techniques and will retain a small in-house capacity to undertake participatory project identification/needs assessment exercises in the poorest communities.

Community participation in decision-making is one of the most important appraisal criteria. Once a subproject project is approved, the sponsor signs an agreement with the JSIF which binds the sponsor to contribute a minimum of 5% of subproject cost (as a matching grant on the part of the community to the JSIF's input), monitor the subproject and oversee the maintenance of the investment.

4. Contracting and Disbursements

The existence of high levels of violence also influenced the design of the JSIF contracting and disbursement procedures. The study emphasizes that community institutions, particularly horizontally-based groups, are vulnerable to co-optation by political, gang and other forces. Control exercised over the contracting and disbursement process increases that vulnerability. Monetary flows to particular groups may prove divisive and actually increase violence.

As part of the sponsor agreement, the sponsor therefore authorizes the JSIF to contract on its behalf with the agency executing the subproject and disburse funds directly to the executing agency. (Such procedures also facilitate the inclusion of informal institutions as subproject sponsors as discussed above).

In areas where the JSIF's institution-building objective outweighs concerns about co-optation and increasing the levels of violence and where the capacity exists, communities are eligible to implement their projects themselves and receive funds directly.

TO LEARN MORE

Moser, Caroline (1996) 'Confronting Crisis: A Comparative study of Household Responses to Poverty and Vulnerability in Four Poor Urban Communities' ESD Studies and Monograph Series No. 8, Washington DC, World Bank

Moser, Caroline and Holland, Jeremy (1995) 'A Participatory Study of Urban Poverty and Violence in Jamaica' TWURD, World Bank

World Bank (1996) Violence and Urban Poverty in Jamaica: Breaking the Cycle, LASHD

World Bank (1996) Staff Appraisal Report Jamaica Social Investment Fund Project, LASHD

1/ Fieldwork was carried out during September-October 1995 by a team from the Centre for Population, Community and Development, Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, under the direction of Dr. Barry Chevannes, in collaboration with researchers from the Urban Development Division of the World Bank, Washington. Ms. Meera Shah, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex participated as the PUA trainer. The study was commissioned by the World Bank's Human Resources Operations Division in LAC3. Funding for fieldwork costs was provided by the British Overseas Development Administration, BDDC.

2/ Social capital is identified as the networks, norms and trust that facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation in a community - both between households and community level social institutions which are horizontal and hierarchical in structure. Empirically it has been shown that the greater the collaboration of horizontally based social institutions at community level, the higher the 'stocks' of social capital (Putnam, 1993).