URBAN YOUTH AT RISK

A SOCIAL FRONTIER FOR SUSTAINABLE SECURITY IN COLOMBIA

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“Bien todo el mundo dice que el futuro es incierto, el pasado es pasado, el presente es la vida. Que la vida es cruel pero... que ingenuos somos nosotros al pensar que el futuro nos va a traer suerte, que el pasado como ya pasó hay que olvidarlo, que el presente...

Hip Hop, papel, esfero es lo único que quiero. Lo siento pero es mi realidad y ahora sigo con una incógnita sin resolver: ¿quién, cómo, cuándo, dónde sucederá?. Hay que seguir logrando lo que queremos, hay que seguir luchando rostros que podemos. La vida es una fabula con miles de moralejas, el mundo es un libro que contienen todas nuestras ideas. Las líneas nuestro camino, todo lo escrito y lo dicho es nuestro destino”.


“Hey, everyone says that the future is uncertain, the past is the past, and the present is life. Life is cruel but... We are naive if we think that the future will bring good luck and that the past must be forgotten, that the present...

Hip hop, paper, pen is the only thing I want. I am sorry, this is my reality and now I go on with the question that doesn’t have an answer: who, how, when, where it will happen? We need to keep achieving what we want; we need to keep showing that we can. Life is a fairytale with thousands of teachings, the world is a book containing our ideas. The lines are our path, all that is written and said is our destiny.”

Andres Medina (Member of Corporacion Son Bata LASO, killed in Medellin, July 2010)

Dedication

On July 3 2010, Andres Felipe Medina was killed as he prepared for my visit (as the Colombian Minister of Culture) to the Laboratories of Social and Cultural Entrepreneurship (LASO) in Comuna 13 in Medellin. After his assassination I learned his story, about his family and life, and visited his house and realized the complex situation that he faced. His reality was shared by many youth on the edge of violence and misery - thousands of young people with outstanding capacities and potential but without opportunities, and a glass wall blocking them from integrating and contributing to society. Given the fact that we could never meet, I promise to his soul and our pain that I will work on this critical social issue. Young people are dying at the hands of other young people senselessly and without purpose. This report is for those youngsters, who are building a future defying hope. Paula Moreno
Presentation

This report aims to provide a preliminary approach to the social and demographic side of security in Colombia given the growing trend of urban violence. It is not an exhaustive review of the topic, but rather an initial exploration into the conditions and dimensions of crime prevention schemes for urban youth in conditions of vulnerability. This is an initial social policy analysis with a proposal-driven and innovation-based approach.

Given that the major achievement and challenge for Colombia has been to cope with major violent phenomena, the main question relates to how to evaluate not only the military strategies but also the social interventions that look to guarantee sustainable security for Colombia. In doing so, the objectives of this report are multifold. First, the report aims to further discuss the demographic category of youth at risk in order to understand the targeted approach by government and different agencies as well as the organizational framework that this category takes in four cities (Cali, Cartagena, Medellin and Quibdo). Second, it seeks to map the risk factors, policies and programs, actors and general conditions in order to have an overview and to try to assess the current level of articulation and impact. The final aim is to make recommendations about opportunities for social innovation in policies, programs and projects. These recommendations are inputs for national and local policies and programs, international agencies and foundations with strategies for youth network advocacy and political empowerment.

The report methodology consists of a review of the literature on youth at risk, urban violence and social innovation. In addition, this analysis of secondary resources was further explored through in-depth interviews and fieldwork in four Colombian cities: Cali, Cartagena, Medellin and Quibdo. The fieldwork comprises a survey, key informant interviews, and focus groups.

Table 1. Multipronged analysis

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<th>Community analysis</th>
<th>Poverty analysis</th>
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<tr>
<td>Risk history of the community</td>
<td>Strengths and deficits of the community</td>
<td>Socio economic situation of youth population in poverty and vulnerability</td>
<td>Geographical surroundings neighborhoods, public services, public space, housing conditions.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Major causes of social pressure and risk</td>
<td>Formal and informal networks</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Major causes of social pressure and risk</td>
<td>Community’s capacities to work together</td>
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</table>

Institutional and organizational analysis

Government agencies.
Grassroots organizations.
Not for profit organizations (churches, foundations).
A multipronged analytical framework was used (Table 1) to understand and discuss five major areas: the condition of youth at risk, the risk factors and phenomena, the institutional and community policies and programs, the actors and social forces for prevention and social change, and the opportunities for social innovation.

Although there are many institutions that are separately trying to analyze the various problems of development, government needs not only to analyze problems but at the same time to incorporate more approaches and possibilities for solutions. The critical issues of today require the academy to come together with analysis and comprehensive approaches on how to create or improve interventions. In a meeting with leaders of youth networks in Toronto, I asked how to effectively include at-risk youth with the growing complexity of addressing differential demographic groups for governments and society in general. One of the leaders, Gavin Sheppard the director of the organization REMIX, said: “you include by including.” His answer was insightful because government and development practitioners need a clear overview of the situation in order to effectively determine how change can be made. In addition, young people are looking for the same approach, not just as analytical subjects for academics and research, but as active participants in practical responses for joint actions.
1. Introduction

Among the schemata used by scholars and professionals who focus on violence and vulnerability, there is a demographic category defined as youth at risk. This category is not widely understood nor frequently used by governments and agencies. Doubts emerge from different perspectives and stem from the definition of youth in terms of age range and characteristics, and the condition of being at risk. In this last aspect, there is debate as to whether risk means exposure or already being affected by any kind of negative conditions.

Youth is the moment in life for defining a sense of identity and belonging. It is a period of transition from dependence (child) to independence (adult), from identity building to responsible citizenship. The age range varies according to the international agencies, governments and research; a consensus range is from 15-26 and 10-26. Some agencies have defined subcategories for young people, dividing them into two main subgroups: adolescents (from 10-18) and adult youth (18-26). In this discussion, I suggest that there is a need to evaluate the current generational conditions that advocate for an earlier or later age range. Nowadays, children are maturing much earlier because of the media and other factors that determine their level of awareness. This happens as early as 10 years, begging the question of whether a 10-year old is still a child or an adolescent. Those measuring social phenomena such as early pregnancy and gangs are reporting the involvement of youngsters from 10 or 12 years old. On the other hand, the end of youth, whether it is defined at 26 or at 30, depends on cultural perspectives and social insertion dynamics. In-depth research that integrates with policy needs to be done in order to analyze these changes in targeting the time lines and conditions of our current youth generation.

The definition of the condition ‘at risk’ is another critical point for this report, in order to try to narrow and facilitate the process of targeting the population. Risk is defined as: the likelihood of a hazard causing harm to an individual or a population, or as: a situation that could be dangerous or have a bad outcome. Consequently, youth at risk is any youth population (according to the age range defined) that is exposed rather than involved in situations of danger or harm. This definition could include a situation in which the hazard has occurred and the risk continues, or one in which the hazard has not occurred.

The World Bank (2007) defines youth at risk as: “Young people who have factors in their life that lead them to engage in behaviors or experience events that are harmful to them and their societies, and that affect not just the risk taker, but the society in general and the future generations.” Other organizations, such as the OECD (1998), use a definition that emphasizes the risk and the need to guarantee an individual’s contribution to society, with the result that the risk becomes the level of threat or restriction of a young citizen to contribute to society. In these definitions, the risk condition in this age group defines a major challenge for development, which
supersedes the consequences for other social groups in economic, social and political terms for the general welfare of society.

In this study, the definition of youth at risk focuses exclusively on prevention. This means that youth exposed to, but not involved in illegal activities, are victims and not perpetrators. These are young people on the edge of poverty and other risky conditions. I suggest a differentiated use of the definitions for ‘at risk’ and ‘criminalized’ youth. These are two different categories for social analysis and policy-making. This differentiation will help to address complex issues related to each condition. For criminalized youth for instance, justice systems and prison systems become critical issues (Martin, 2009); for youth at risk, the discussion is focused on prevention. If there is a differentiation between the two categories, policies and programs will be more focused on effective actions and knowledge generation. In the fieldwork for this report, a major finding was the contrast between local authorities and youth networks in terms of their views regarding the targeting of youth. For some local authorities, the major investment in criminalized youth means that they are working on the conditions of risk; on the other hand, for the youth networks the focus on criminalization is a perverse incentive for them to receive government assistance for individuals involved in illegal activities. In 2007, the Ministry of Social Protection published a manual for violence prevention in Colombia that highlights: “...attention and rehabilitation are not, strictly, the same thing as prevention. Even if they have a preventive value to the repetition of events”. (PAHO&GTZ, 2007; 9). For this reason, a major recommendation of this report is to narrow the definition at risk.

Why target youth?

In the field of development, one major issue is how to prioritize action with scarce resources and why to give major focus to one group versus another. A consensus exists in terms of differentiated approaches to tackle social phenomena such as poverty or violence.

There is a breadth of literature demonstrating the different causes and effects of risk from generational, ethnic, gender and territorial perspectives. Development agencies and scholars such as Amartya Sen have called attention to this urgent need to diversify understanding. They agree on the role of youth as a key development player (Sen & Klisberg 2007). Even so, it is important that different approaches not stigmatize or create labels that are more problem or epidemic oriented than value-oriented opportunities for the target community. As Krishna (2010) points out, it is not
enough to agree on the context specific reasons for whom to target while ignoring what to target. These must be together in order to define how and where to intervene. This last aspect is critical in order to avoid making generalizations and to point to situations as permanent and intrinsic, and not temporary and exogenous.

August 2010 to 2011 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year for Youth. The main aim is: "... an effort to harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world's youth in overcoming the challenges facing humankind, from enhancing peace to boosting economic development." The UN year for youth shows the main approach to this population, which focuses on promoting participation.

Most young people in the world live in poverty, with high unemployment rates to blame for the complexity of major conflicts and illegal networks. For instance, security in some regions such as Latin America and Africa or in major urban centers in the U.S. or Europe depends substantially on the social effectiveness of reducing youth involvement in illegal activities. In this regard, the main question is whether there is a comprehensive approach to the youth at risk phenomena in the world and a potential for building equality and understanding from today's generation. A major global effort is required to pass from rhetoric to recognition in defining and implementing the conditions for change and building opportunities.

Youth is a critical moment for starting to be an integrated social agent. Social cohesion and inequality begin at youth, given the initiation of individual awareness of the sense of belonging to or exclusion from society. Major evidence can be found to show the critical role of youth in changing social, political and economic systems, such as the recent phenomenon in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries, where youth networks become a powerful force of mobilization that can redefine government. In 1999, Manuel Castells expressed: "While we are organizing, from above, a new economic and technological order; wide sectors of young people are building, from below, an alternative disorder whose main driving force is a system that excludes them."

A recent edition of Bloomberg BusinessWeek in Feb 2011, entitled "A message from the street" highlights: "The common element of failure is not just of young people to find a place in society, but of society itself to harness the energy, intelligence and enthusiasm of the next generation."

A major movement of urban youth is developing as an underground phenomenon, whose impact is still being unveiled.

Several phenomena illustrate the key role of youth. Increasing urbanization in developing countries is characterized by a demographic trend; the 2009 UN Habitat global report for human settlements calls particular attention to: "... the increasing proportion of young people (aged 15 to 29) relative to the adult population and its implications for urban planning to pay particular attention to the needs of this segment of the population. A key question is how to meet the needs of the youth who constitute the majority of the urban population. One example is the Middle East and North Africa where urbanization is expected to reach 70 per cent by 2030 with about 65 per cent of the region's population under the age of 30 (UN Habitat, 2009)."
Another critical issue is youth unemployment; ILO (2010) establishes that youth unemployment globally is three times higher than the adult rate. The Businessweek article highlighted earlier notes that: “Youth unemployment will be the next epidemic of this decade unless we get on it right now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin American Youth in numbers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40% (more than 200 millions) total regional population</td>
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<tr>
<td>50% faces multiple risks</td>
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<tr>
<td>39% youth population live in poverty (15 million in extreme poverty)</td>
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<tr>
<td>28% school drop out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% unemployment rate (30 million in informal work)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-2% major economic negative impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2% country GDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 1.4% to 1% expenditure in criminalized youth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank, 2008; ECLAC, 2008; UNICEF

From a regional perspective, youth population in Latin America is a demographic window of opportunity for poverty reduction that goes beyond participation or desire, but deep into the capacity and possibility of making change.

According to UN Habitat, Latin America is the most urbanized region in the developing world, where the urban population increased from 41 per cent in 1950 to 78 per cent in 2007. The region’s four largest countries – Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Argentina – are about 80 per cent urbanized. It is estimated that the rising youth population in urban areas will continue to be a growing trend. One example is Brazil, where urban population is 163 million out 195, of which 51 million are youth (10-24) and 28% of which live in slums.

Dealing with the different analyses and actions on youth at risk is a critical area for effective policy and programming in Latin America. Youth at risk represent high social inequality, lack of productivity and negative economic costs. In terms of youth networks, there are similarities in the complexity of networks from country to country. A key point is how to address youth in the development agenda not only as a crosscutting issue but also as a comprehensive and measurable approach.
II. The State of Youth at risk in Colombia

“There is an attitude to confuse the symptoms with the problems. The growing urban violence is the symptom of major social problems that need to be pointed out”.

Policeman interviewed

Colombia is a country in Latin America that represents some of the greatest challenges and achievements in terms of security. However, the sustainability of security achievements depends largely on a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to the complexity of violence and developmental challenges. The continuous and competitive renovation of security strategies and action needs a complementary social and economic intervention with a high level of effectiveness. Recently, the new government announced a second phase of the democratic security policy initiated by the previous government, entitled "citizen security". Major objectives of this policy are city security and strengthening criminal justice, particular for youths under 18 years old.

This is a critical moment for discussing not only the major innovations needed in terms of security but also the urgent social changes required for long-term stability. Now is the moment for sharpening crime prevention and avoiding major social distortion. Strategic actions are needed not only to control the streets but also to transform homes and families, then to disarm various conflicts and prevent any risk.

Colombian youth are the main victims and actors of violence (PAHO&GTZ, 2007). Most youth in Colombia die from violent causes. In 2009, the Institute of Legal Medicine stated that the highest homicide rate in Colombia is in the age range from 25 to 29 and that there is an incremental trend from 10 to 29 years old that particularly affects men. At the same time, youth represent the highest rate of suicide rates, which oscillates in age ranges between 20 to 24 and 25 to 29.
At the national level different policies and programs have been designed, although with marginal impact due to the lack of models and budget limitations. The last national policy for youth was approved in 1995 (16 years ago) and there is a lack of updated national guidelines for a major comprehensive approach to targeting the most needy youth population and the most critical sectors. The lack of national guidelines and schemes influences a local lack of effective policies and systematic programs. In such a complex situation, the lack of coordination and strategic alliances not only for offering programs but also for defining outcomes is a critical point. In major urban centers such as Cali, Medellin or Cartagena, youth represent the major homicide rate and incarcerated population. These examples of initial indicators of secondary information, which needs more in depth study and analysis, illustrate the urgency for major policies, budget allowances and a focus on youth in vulnerable conditions.

**Panorama of youth at risk in Colombia in numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population (15-24)</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8.3 million (23.7%)</td>
<td>2020: 8.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10-24)</td>
<td>13.2 million (30%)</td>
<td>13.8 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urban Youth 75.8%

33% of Colombian youth does not study or work (World Bank, 2008)

Youth Unemployment: Latin America 13% Colombia 21.7% (OIT, 2010)

Population of youth registered as displaced: **fully identified 90,000** Ethnic group 21.2% Afro-descendant, 3.7% indigenous (Acción Social)

 Violent death rate for youth (13 to 15,000 average 2007-2009)

74% of young people in Colombia die from violent causes (66% homicides; 8% suicides) (80% men; 20% women)

For the national population as a whole the rate of death by violent causes: 20%

Incarcerated population: 75,992 46% young men 18-29 42.37% Young women 18-29

Sources: DANE; DNP; World Bank; ILO, UNFPA

**Legal Framework**

- **Youth Law, Law** 375 of 1997 (Youth 1426)
- **Childhood and Adolescence Code, Law** 1098 of 2006 (Adolescence 12-18)
- **Citizen Security Law, Law** 1453 2011
  - 3 Decrees (National Program and organization of local councils for youth)
  - 2 State policies for youth (1992, 1995)
- New State policy for youth to be approved
The social networks of urban youth

“Before, they used to see us as street dwellers; afterwards, as lazy and nothing-to-do young people; now they see us as a peaceful proposal and as role models in order to make children and other young people understand that it is better to make hiphop, to learn arts than take a gun”. Jeihco (la Elite Hip Hop)

In major urban areas with the highest levels of exclusion, a social fabric of youth networks and organizations exists. These networks are vital community development projects in areas such as culture, communication or environmental management. They have created alternative spaces and ways to define their collective projects, in many cases in solidarity against exclusion, peace building and to defy despair. Recently, some leaders of these networks have become victims of violence because of their peace building approach, their objective to remove youth from violence and for trying to be alternative models to gang involvement. ¹ There is a diversity of youth social movements in the slums: groups, networks, organizations, councils, clubs, units, community organizations and businesses. The structure and scope of these organizational forms needs to be studied in order to define their role and support for building the capacity and provision of social services.

There are some agencies that have provided support to some of these networks, mainly locally through participatory budgeting, projects of cooperation agencies and at the national level via a few programs such as Social Labs of Culture and Entrepreneurship (LASO) in the Ministry of Culture. Between 2009 and 2010, through its management approach of “culture of all, culture for all”, the Ministry of Culture gave priority to urban youth at risk and cultural entrepreneurship. The program LASO worked with 250 youth organizations that bring together over 1500 young people. LASO has been a model for targeting cultural organizations, not just for participation but also in delivering opportunities for training, income generation and networking.

Jesus Martin Barbero outlines: “...If youth policies do not reflect the cultural changes caused by communication and information processes and systems, they misunderstand what young people are living and how they live. Then, there will not be possibilities to develop citizens, and without citizens we will have neither a competitive society in productivity nor a democratic society in the political field.” Through culture, media and social services youth are social agents finding avenues of self-employment, new ways to interact with urban space and alternative for active citizenship.

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<th>Table 3. Comparative analysis of the four case studies.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Youth population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth at risk (aprox.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and cultural networks in slums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth homicides(2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: interviews, survey and local police

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4 http://www.mincultura.gov.co/laso/

Case study 1. Maria Mulatas Callejas – Cartagena

“We integrate several youth organizations that express the culture of urban life. This raises awareness, and helps our society achieve a higher level of development, social order, justice, peace and dignity -which we all need so much.”
http://www.myspace.com/mariamulatas

Our project: To eradicate the stigma against hip-hop by creating a new musical coalition and brand in Cartagena.

Date of creation: 2002
Members: 100 from 20 to 30 years old
Most of them are heads of household.
Occupation: Arts, music, DJ, painting (grafitti) and dance.
Location: Southwest of Cartagena

Case study 2. Corporacion Son Bata. Medellin

“Our homes are rudimentary and hang one over the other, in a bit of mountain where the sun shines longest in the day. Palm trees come from other regions to green the color of the pavement, warming up not only the air (somewhat vitiated by the smell of sewage), but the spirit of the neighbours, who live with dignity and pride in spite of their poverty.”
Flickr Corporación Son Bata
Case study 3. TITANIO. Cali

“Titanio aims to develop activities that increase the effective participation of youth in community development programs, in order to encourage peaceful co-existence from an ethnic perspective.
III. Understanding the risk factors and their interrelations

A first step in analyzing the state of youth at risk is to define the risks. This report compares international agencies, the national and local governments and the youth organizations. A total of 18 major risks were identified as shown in table 4. A preliminary association for analysis of the risk factors is proposed in accordance with the following categories:

• **Direct risks associated with violence and illegality.** This category encompasses the presence of illegal networks that operate in negative phenomena, such as: drug trafficking, prostitution and forced recruitment. The fieldwork highlights the remarkable variety and rapidly evolving nature of the forms of violent and illegal acts that affect and involve youth. For instance, the transition from physical to digital prostitution associated with pornography on the web, or the use of cultural expressions to recruit children. The youth networks cited a major risk not mentioned by local and national authorities – suicide. Mapping out these risks in detail is necessary in order to effectively work against the untraditional forms they currently take.

• **Risks associated with poverty and lack of opportunities.** Poverty among young people and their families inflicts a major survival constraint for this population. This last aspect corresponds to the top risk classified at the international and local level, the correlation between youth unemployment and the precarious life conditions their families endure. The level of quality and limited access to social services and state programs is a major concern. Education is a principal area to address. The school dropout rate questions the quality of models, support and adaptation of the educational systems. Social factors such as inadequate urbanism and housing constrain the impact of social services and demonstrate the ways the urban structure in some slums facilitates illegal activities and violent acts (World Bank, 2010). Finally, youth networks also mention comparative incentives, meaning the incentives provided to youth who are demobilized former combatants compared to the reduced support for youth not involved in illegal activities.

• **Risks associated with stigmatization, discrimination and social exclusion.** The stigmatization of youth in conditions of poverty or misery closes the door to access to general offers, such as employment and other forms of social engagement”. The stigma is also related to a discriminatory approach, in which youth are judged and stereotyped not only for where they live, but also, in many cases, for their race, displacement conditions and gender.

• **Risks associated with the lack of life projects.** The lack of hope and purpose in life is a critical issue. The negative role models are more visible than positive ones. There is a need to rebuild the self-esteem of the population, reinforce and make visible the positive stories, and promote and strengthen community leadership.
- **Risks associated with health-related issues.** Risks such as drug and alcohol addictions, early pregnancies, and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS are matters of public health that need to be analyzed and addressed with major prevention strategies.

### Table 4. The major risk factors from study sources

<table>
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<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>World Bank: UN Habitat and UNICEF</th>
<th>National and local governments</th>
<th>Youth networks Call</th>
<th>Youth networks Medellin</th>
<th>Youth networks Cartagena</th>
<th>Youth Networks Quibdo</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Youth networks mention labor discrimination based on where they live and how they look, in addition to a lack of quality employment and family unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education - School dropout</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Quality, relevance of coursework, poverty and short periods at school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate urbanism and housing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>The so-called invisible frontiers (territorial boundaries in the slums)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced recruitment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family dysfunction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Reference to single motherhood and domestic violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution (digital or physical)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sexual tourism and new forms using internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaced population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnant adolescence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual health</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>No clarity in HIV/AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free time (on the corner)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Cali there is a problem with gang rivalry between upper class youth and those from the slums</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other important risks mentioned by youth networks: internet without orientation; stigmatization of youth; social negative chain (alcohol, drugs, violence and other illegal activities); guns market; inequality in knowledge and information about opportunities; comparative incentives fo criminalized youth versus youth not involved in illegal activities) and support for displaced youth; lack of life project and orientation; lack of good role models; use of cultural activities to recruit youth; displaced youth; justice system; non-state policy.
Many contexts illustrate a combination and accumulation of risks, and the need for the detection and monitoring of these factors. In most national and local agencies, there is a gap between the understanding of the risk factors and the effectiveness of programs integrally addressing the reduction of the risk condition. The lack of permanent and informed risk mapping hinders action on the causes and the effectiveness of prevention schemes with a comprehensive approach.
IV Organizational analysis for prevention

Evaluating the relevant social forces is necessary to create sustainable social change. According to the interviews and survey, the participants highlighted the key role of the State from its different sectoral, national and local agencies, and that of schools, churches, grassroots community organizations, police and international cooperation agencies. All of the participants agreed on the urgent need for a major state role in leading the other forces. Figure 2 illustrates the main forces mentioned in the fieldwork.

![Diagram showing major social forces highlighted in the participatory process](image)

Figure 2. Major social forces highlighted in the participatory process

The role of the state

“Criminals are two steps ahead of the government in social approaches and use seductive strategies to engage youth” Community leader

In terms of national institutional capacity, a program of the Presidency directs the youth policy entitled: “Colombia Joven”. In 2010, it had a budget equivalent to 600 million (Colombian pesos (USD 300,000). In terms of human resources, there are 3 professionals designated to the program and a group of 10 contractors on average. Colombia Joven has mainly worked in youth governance, with a major participatory approach without any measure of impact in decision making through the 470 youth local councils. The sustainability, tools, and level of impact of the participatory system created by the National Youth Law need to be evaluated. There are other state agencies working with youth (e.g.: National Training System (SENA), Family Welfare Institute (ICBF); however, there is no articulation, focalized information, comprehensive models or common goals for youth in conditions of vulnerability or exposed risks.

At the local level, there are outstanding differences. For instance, Medellin is the city that
invests the most in programs for youth in vulnerable situations, over 3,179 million Colombian pesos (USD 1.5 million) in 100 programs, in alliance with the private sector, non-profit organizations and youth networks. In contrast, Cali, one of the cities with the most critical situations and a high homicide rate for youth, has invested on average 600 million Colombian pesos (USD 300,000) in a few youth programs. Other cities like Quibdo have a budget of 250 million pesos (USD 125,000) for operation and programs. National and local investment goes mainly to training or the provision of general basic services (e.g. education, health). In terms of human resources, in most cities there is no designated secretary or sub secretary of youth and there are only one or two professionals designated and three to five contractors. The exception is Medellin with a youth subsecretariat composed of 50 employees and contractors. An initial analysis of the structure, policies and programs in each of the four cities, reveals concerns about the level of effectiveness and the criteria for decision making.

The situation of national and local institutions in terms of the attention to youth at risk is similar in the following aspects:

- Lack of policies, guidelines and programs that systematically address the risk conditions. In general, there is a lack of a model of intervention for general prevention of youth violence and effective ways to target the most vulnerable youth.
- The budget is small compared to the levels of needs (except for Medellin).
- Promotion of youth participation and governance from a volunteer perspective but without institutional frameworks for implementation.
- Lack of highly prepared teams to understand and proactively deal with the complexity of the risk factors and relate to youth organizations.
- No focused data available and a lack of applied research. The main source of information is the police and there is no articulation of data analysis or monitoring. In addition, even if there are a few research studies, in many ways these remain unknown or are not used as a reference for the directors and some of the technical staff interviewed.
- The call for proposals demands some formats and requirements that youth organizations cannot accomplish and does not incorporate a process for capacity building, assistance and assessment. In addition, the inefficiency in the process of submission, evaluation, legalization and execution of the projects in a fiscal year, creates a time line for execution of the project of 3 months on average, which is very short for building a process.
- In several cases, there are institutional programs without clear criteria and an approach to building strategic processes to reduce risk or social change. Segmented, fragmented and unarticulated actions are only illustrated in numbers (e.g. young people attending workshops) and not in outcome or effective changes.

There are other institutions and organizations that play a major role, such as cooperation agencies and non-profit organizations. However, the lack of government guidelines leads to disarticulated cooperation and actions. There is a general need to analyze the social forces that could create a network of capacity (Moore, 2008). The role of the state is critical to map, motivate, promote, empower and direct families, grassroots organizations, and churches, among others, in the common goal of prevention and youth welfare.
V Recommendations

Social results, just like security and other sectorial tasks, respond to programmatic efforts. For effective results, a development process must be built for reducing to the maximum level the risk factors for a young person. A key element in the research process was the focus on ways to neutralize risk in a proposal-driven approach based on social innovation. Moubert (2010) defines social innovation approach as: “the satisfaction of social needs, empowerment of marginalized communities and change in social power relations fermenting the creativity of everyday life.” The conclusion of this report offers a set of the recommendations considered the most relevant for youth organizations, institutions and development agencies based in a social innovation approach.

**Recommendation 1. Target youth at risk through socio-economic interventions to reduce poverty, vulnerability and prevent violence.** It is crucial to focus not only on the criminalized youth but also the majority who are not involved in illegal activities in urban settings. The differentiation is fundamental in order to develop the deepest meaning of prevention, especially in terms of changing the attitudes of individuals and the general community to a proactive, positive and pro-change stance toward the enforcement of youth contribution to society. The new national and updated local policies and programs for youth should be responsible for targeting and making this distinction. In addition, the youth lens should be understood as a crosscutting issue not only in the general social system, but also as a vertical in terms of specific programs and intervention.

**Recommendation 2. Change the development approach.** Implementing a social innovation approach requires changing the criteria to address youth exposed to vulnerability and risks. On the one hand, recognizing the potential and contribution of youth is a starting point. This means recognizing the capacity of youth to build, transform and play a key role in satisfying their communities’ social needs (Goldsmith, 2010). Channeling their force, capacity, energy and creativity remains a major challenge that requires a shift in approach: from beneficiaries to actors; reactive to proactive; assistance to capacity building, empowerment and insertion; from good deeds, provision of services or attention indicators to better results and measures of effective change; from individual entrepreneurship to community and networks of social entrepreneurship.

**Recommendation 3. Build on existing community initiatives.** This proposal charts the youth organizations and measures their capacity. This evaluation recommends establishing a platform of youth social supply service, or youth providing services for public and private sector in areas related to the quality of life of their communities or business opportunities.

In several cities, clubs and organization operate within a volunteer framework. Youth networks highlighted that the volunteer scheme is not the most adequate for youth at risk. Given the level of needs in their families, any social contribution should incorporate rewards or a system of
incentives. This should be socially competitive considering the counteroffers of existing illicit networks.

For instance, youth networks could support a strategy for reducing school dropout rates and develop schemes for urban renovation of their own houses, streets and neighborhoods (social urbanism). It would be important at the local and national level to integrate social needs and the youth organizations’ abilities as state suppliers of social services. Currently, several groups are occasionally called upon for small projects, and this proposal seeks to create a major services platform to commit to improve their organizational capacities.

**Recommendation 4. A social chain for prevention.** The term “social chain” refers to the need for articulated forces with funding, guidelines and monitoring systems to create protective factors or counteract risky conditions – defining when, where and how to act. This means complementary roles between the state, the non-profit sector, the different categories of youth networks and other social forces in the territory. There is a need to creatively and effectively connect social intervention, monitor programs and define when the condition at risk is substantially reduced.

The social chain of prevention should consist of a sequence monitor in each stage to connect with the other actions, and a clear definition of different sectors’ actions (e.g. education, health, culture, and employment), responsibilities and moment of intervention. It is a comprehensive approach to align and package the programs in search of an effective integration of systems and performance indicators (based on understanding the different impacts and stages of intervention). This entails creating or renewing services for strengthening the social offerings available and connecting individual change with the family. The situation at risk related not only for the young person at risk but also for his or her family.

**Recommendation 5. Build institutional capacity, services pathways and train individuals in the front line of public service.** A high level of effective management is needed to achieve social outcomes for changing at risk conditions. For this reason, strategic alliances and detailed evaluations of the level of capacities are a key element in generating an effective organizational arrangement to deal with overwhelmed institutions and complex social phenomena in an articulated social service approach.

In addition, directors, coordinators, teachers and other public employees, as well as parents and other adults should be particularly trained in their level of understanding of the youth population so as to enable them to help foster their personal skills to manage authority, engage in persuasion and channel the energy and capacities of young people. In addition, these individuals should be trained to raise awareness and commitment in terms of family, institutional and local capacities for peace building that aim to reduce any kind of violence (e.g. domestic).

**Recommendation 6. Implement affirmative action programs for youth at risk and incentives.** To reduce discrimination and marginalization, specific temporary or permanent
actions are needed to open spaces for effective inclusion and economic and social competitive insertion. In the areas of major discrimination compared to other social groups there is a need to create affirmative permanent conditions for access. Likewise, incentives connected to the change situation should be carefully designed in order to avoid becoming counterproductive (e.g. the current conditional cash transfers for school attendance and the Familias en Accion program).

One example is the access to the labor market. Work intermediation services are required to combat discrimination and create social resilience in order to build confidence, access and competitiveness. In order to reduce unemployment and channel the new law for first employment, special programs to guarantee that youth in the periphery are integrated in the labor market in equal conditions must be created.

**Recommendation 7. Develop a knowledge base.** There is a lack of consistent and clear information to demonstrate the risk factors and social problems. It is an urgent priority not only to contract and make studies, but also to use those already undertaken to define guidelines and schemes for information and the use of applied research. Colombia as a state and at local levels needs to characterize key risk factors, to determine their relationships, the threats, the dynamics, the actors and the levels of vulnerability.

This knowledge base should integrate a system of data (rather than creating new systems, this means strengthening and using the existing ones, such as those developed by the police, secretary of government, universities, observatories) and promoting community partnerships to analyze social phenomena (community members as subjects and as social researchers). New thinking and operation modes are developed and must be studied and documented in order to propose strategies in coherency with the present world of youth dynamics. In addition, this knowledge base should connect to widespread social media and be strategically disseminated to different audiences, starting with the community as a tool for their political empowerment and development agenda.

Around the world, there are several governments and organizations that have tried to develop program for at risk youth. More than models, these programs constitute a knowledge base and a learning chain to several of the proposals made and also new proposals that could emerge (See figure 3). The main message is the need to rethink and renew the social schemes and strategies to better address this kind of complex and important social issues. In Colombia, there is a major need to map the outstanding models and experiences at local and national levels. Examples mentioned in the literature review and
some interviews were: Jóvenes en acción (Youth in Action), Casas de Justicia (Justice Centers) and some of the local programs, above all in Medellin. A major review of these experiences must be conducted with a view to create an institutional and organizational culture of social competitiveness and innovation. As Khrisna (2010) highlights, there is a need to balance the macro and micro perspectives for social change, and there is a need to pay attention to ordinary events that can contribute or be improved to reduce risks. Prevention policies are daily life policies that are not static and need continuous feedback and renovations.

**Recommendation 8. Social entrepreneurship: neighborhoods economy and markets.** The goal here is to integrate youth in strategies to organize their community economic assets and demand goods, in order to develop and organize productive and resilient relations across the public, private and civil society sectors. This work includes youth businesses that benefit their community and build economically differentiated products in the local, national and global market based on their background.

**Recommendation 9. Rebuild the country.** Colombia is enduring the worst natural disaster crisis in history due to flooding in 2010 and 2011. More than 2,500,000 citizens are without homes, many lack food and thousands of others are still in risky environmental conditions. Since there is no certainty that these natural phenomena will not be repeated permanently, youth should be a major force to create capacity for rebuilding, relocating and generating expertise in natural disasters and environmental protective management.

**Recommendation 10. Build bridges to transform the local and general imaginary.** It is important to change perceptions and stereotypes, and make visible the values of the youth community exposed to risk or any level of vulnerability. First, new role models must be promoted and made visible. Role models can be individuals, organizations and projects, and serve as the living proof that it is possible and worthwhile to have a life purpose and develop capacities. More importantly, they demonstrate that there are other opportunities and paths apart from illegality. Second, it is crucial to create chains of knowledge exchange and mentoring to reduce the gaps, break the social prejudices and integrate around local, national or international initiatives.
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