

Gang Culture in South Africa and its Impact

Irvin Kinnes, PhD Candidate, Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town

1. Introduction

Gangs are an international phenomenon and it has impacted on many countries across the globe. The growth and development of gangs are linked to questions of security, housing, health, resources, jobs, poverty and above all, solidarity. The crises faced by countries such as Jamaica, Colombia, the United States, New Zealand, Russia, the United Kingdom, India, South Africa and Kenya with respect to gang violence, is not new. It has challenged the ability of governments across the world to address the tendency of young people to gravitate to gangs as a solution to crises facing them. Social researchersⁱ have long argued that young people drift into a life of crime when the social crises facing them become acute. Crime, delinquency and gangs become a solution to the crisis.

The aim of this paper is then to look at the development of South African gang culture and its changes over the last decade. It will also look at how the gangs have survived numerous policing operations and what their impact has been on the South African communities, governance processes, the economy and the ability of the government to implement its programmes. It will conclude with some proposals for dealing with the gangs.

Gangs in South Africa have had its genesis on the Witwatersrand in the late 1880's with the discovery of goldⁱⁱ. Initially, these gangs were established inside our prisons. They eventually grew beyond prison walls as time passed. Street gangs in South Africa quickly grew with the forced removals instituted by the South African Government in the mid 1960's. While gangs existed in the townships of South Africa such as Sophiatownⁱⁱⁱ and District Six, they were not nearly as organized and attractive as when the government dumped black people in outlying areas far away from the centre of town. When these removals were effected, the gangs took its cultural practices with them.^{iv}

Although there are similar organizations of gangs across the globe, each formation has its own culture and traditions that permeate the very community that the gang is located in. What precisely gang culture is remains contested terrain amongst researchers. It can mean very different things depending on time and space. Gang culture can refer to the rights, rituals^v, practices and traditions of the gang that prevails for generations. Some gangs do not have long life-spans, while others have very long traditions and life-spans. It is generally accepted that gangs however eventually become more organized or they dissipate in the course of its life.

The structures and hierarchy differ. The leadership structures differ from country to country, the levels of violence differs, the laws of the country they operate in differ, but they all engage in similar actions and activities.

Gangs arise when the social relations of power in the social structure are unequally distributed in a society that restricts legitimate opportunities to marginalized groups. They emerge as interest groups in a community that are formed around very specific goals. These gangs flourish in areas where the collective expression of society is dependent on exclusion of poorer groups of people from the dominant social relations of production^{vi}.

2. Context

The impact and effect of globalization has brought with it many benefits in the form of the technology revolution with the age of faster, more efficient computers, I-pods, satellite television and mobile phones with technological innovations.

All of these technological challenges have helped to introduce to societies across the world, the conspicuous consumption patterns which have been fueled by Western demands. It has brought many benefits to the communications systems of Africa and indeed the world. It is not just the good benefits that globalization has engendered. It is also helped international criminal syndicates make the access to countries with poorly developed criminal justice systems, easier. Telecommunications and satellite technology has made it easier for international criminal syndicates to compromise the banking systems of some countries and fraud syndicates have had a field day in some of the Southern African countries when it comes to fraud.

At a cultural level, the values, norms and morals of the local population have also been infused with a healthy dose of the consumption culture that has permeated almost every developing country in the world. Young people have been drawn to this consumption culture through what they see and internalize on then international media circuit, computers, chat rooms, mobile- phones. The Americanization of language, dress and indeed politics have captured the imagination of a generation of young people. The message young people internalize through this culture is being able to make a quick dollar by taking shortcuts and displaying loyalty to no-one in the process. Gangster Rap and other sub cultural languages are spreading very fast on the continent and serves to create social solidarity between young people who often feel that they have been marginalized.

The South African experience stands out in contrast to the world only because the legitimate opportunity structure for young people has been opened in 1994 through the democratization of the state^{vii}. This political transformation has come with the unconscious restriction of economic opportunities including the growth of the illegitimate opportunity structure that rewards deviant behaviour and encourages young people to drift into a life of crime.

All the urban centres in South Africa have one form or another of gangs. The cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and Bloemfontein have similar gangs. Rapid urbanization after 1994 has also contributed to the changing patterns of gangs in South Africa as the urban poor search for more opportunities in the city centres. It is however in Cape Town and Johannesburg where the problem is most acute.

3. South African Gang Formations, Typologies and Structures

Gang typologies in South Africa differ and vary. Don Pinnock^{viii} has played a very important role in defining the typologies which have endured for a very long time, although these typologies are now busy undergoing changes. Basically there have been four typologies; they range from prison gangs to defence or street gangs, family mafia and finally syndicate gangs. The prison gangs have for years been the most organized with a defined leadership hierarchy^{ix}, middle managers and foot soldiers. They have influenced the practice of other gangs acquiring social capital over other street gangs. It does not matter what street gang you belong to in South Africa today; if you have not been a member of a prison gang, you carry no real weight in a street or other gang. This practice resonates with practices of the Mexican Mafia and the Black Guerilla Family in Los Angeles. Doing time and carrying a “number” is political capital in the gang underworld.

3.1 The Street/Defence Gangs

The street/defence gangs are usually led by young people who exert their dominance over the rest of the gang. This is however beginning to change as the relationship between young people and the older leaders are beginning to change in the face of globalization. Younger people are instinctively more susceptible to influences from older gang members. This type of gang has been undergoing changes in South Africa over the last decade. The street gangs have changed from small time operators protecting their turf and have been able to get masses of young males and females to form part of their gang. Social scientists^x and policing agencies have estimated that there may be between 80 000 to 120 000 gang members operating in Cape Town alone.

The street gangs have become the handmaiden of politicians, criminal syndicates, other family mafia type gangs and small time corrupt government officials and police members. The street gangs have traditionally been involved in small time theft, robberies, drug dealing and extortion. In recent times, they have gravitated to drug abuse and have begun to dabble in supplying drugs.

3.2 The Family Mafia Structure

Family Mafia typologies have traditionally operated in the townships of Cape Town and other parts of the country by operating taverns and shebeens up to the early 1980's. They also involved themselves in the world of stolen goods and the distribution thereof, although all of this changed in the mid 1985 political uprisings in the Vaal Triangle. It should be remembered that this gang typology is unique for a number of reasons. Firstly almost all of the family mafia types of gangs have been led by people who at some stage have been a senior ranking gang member in the prison gangs. Secondly, they have almost always had family ties, brothers, sisters, uncles and siblings have been involved in the gang. The leadership of these types of gangs have also co-operated with the old Apartheid police and frequently provided information to them about the activities of political activists.

The gangs have undergone a major transformation with the advent of democracy in 1994. Early on, the farsighted sections of the gang leadership saw the opportunities that would be thrown up as a result of political freedom and the opening up of borders. They started setting up drug outlets and have become deeply involved in a number of crimes, with drugs supply as their chief criminal activity. They have enrolled the assistance of street gangs to protect what is known as their "Yards" and have provided money for younger members to live in "their place of work".

They have provided job opportunities as they expand into the transport (minibus-taxis) and entertainment industry.

3.3 Syndicate Gangs

This typology has grown the fastest of all gangs operating in the country. The South African Police Services have estimated that there are over fifty two criminal syndicates operating in South Africa^{xi}. These syndicate gangs have been able to establish connections with local partners to the point that they have been able to recruit individuals that have never been involved in crime, and who have never any criminal record. It is these criminal syndicates that have been able to effectively corrupt officials, police officers, and whole sections of some communities. They have been the most dangerous typology in terms of resource distribution because they are able to provide their members with tangible benefits from the proceeds of their crimes.

Involvement in cash in transit robberies, extortion, fraud, organized assassinations, drug distribution, trafficking of women and children, supply of small arms, car theft, and supply of counterfeit goods are some of the activities that these syndicates become involved in. They are usually led by an individual who has experience of the criminal justice system and has also spent time in prison.

Syndicate gangs have proved the most difficult to penetrate because of the small numbers involved and the cohesiveness of the individual gangs. Whereas the internal core of the gang is small, the external network is large and the individuals involved do not always know what they are involved in. An example of this was when one senior member of the Firm recruited a senior executive of a leading South African bank to open a trust account with over thirty million ZAR. This money was the subject of a recent application by the directorate of special investigations (Scorpions) to recover the monies as proceeds of crime.

4.4 Prison Gangs

The prison gangs have been the most active gangs on the South African landscape for a great number of years until the early seventies when street gangs became very active.

They were essentially started to control over the meager resources in South African prisons and have had a lasting impact on the street gang culture over the last two decades. They have endured the political changes in the country and ostensibly they are present in all of South Africa's prisons. The dominant gangs are the numbers gangs as Johnny Steinberg has alluded to.

They control many of the prisons after hours when warders are not present and their leadership constitutes a quasi government (or "kring") inside prison after hours where they control the fate of hundred and thousands of gangs.

They have contributed substantially to the general criminality by recruiting members for the dominant strands, the 26's and the 28 gang. The main economic activity remains drugs. One cannot separate the South African gangs from drugs.

5. Contribution to the National Crime Picture

Gangs have certainly contributed to the overall crime picture in South Africa. Exactly what percentage of crime is not known although, depending on whom in government you speak to, estimates vary. Justice officials are on record saying that every second murder docket is gang related. There are a number of reasons for this

Firstly, gang crime is not recorded as such. It is hidden in the general crime administration system (CAS) architecture. We therefore cannot with certainty say, in the South African case, what percentage of crime is gang related. How much of the general crime statistics is directly attributable to gangs?

There is no scientific statistical picture of what the South African Police consider as gang related crimes. Depending on whom you speak to, one gets the picture that every second crime could be gang related. If you speak to SAPS, you get a different picture because they are not at all sure that gangs contribute significantly to the overall crime statistics. In fact there are those who argue that gang violence have significantly declined over the last year. This resonates with the National Youth Gang Centre in the United States who found that:

“An informed estimate of the economic cost of gang crimes cannot be made because gang crimes are not routinely and systematically recorded in most law enforcement agencies. Hence, the proportion of all crimes attributable to gangs is unknown.”^{xii}

Secondly, the gangs have managed to rapidly re-invest themselves as organised crime and have re-shaped the criminal enterprise^{xiii}. This social organisation of the gang present police with a major problem: How to act against gang members who have graduated to greater degrees of criminality?

Where they exist as organised formations, gangs have decentralised over a number of years and this makes their structure much tighter and cohesive. Smaller numbers are able to manage and plan the criminal enterprise and this makes penetration of the gang by police intelligence agents much more difficult and dangerous.

By labelling the behaviour of certain people gangsters, societies often make the mistake of pushing children at risk further downstream into the hands of gang leaders. There are situations where force has to be used to contain some of the more violent gangs across the Province, but these gangs are usually in the minority. Adopting strong anti-gang measures invariably drive the younger gang members into the hands of the hardened minority. It therefore becomes necessary to focus any social transformation on dealing with prevention, juvenile diversion programmes and the development of economic opportunities.

6. South Africa Gangs and Drugs

Inextricably tied up with the South African gang typology is the drug economy. Unlike many of the gangs in the United States, drugs have been a common factor in the continued growth of the gangs. The Department of Social development is at the forefront of the implementation of the Drug National Master Plan^{xiv} which is intended to combat the spread of drugs throughout the country. The drug, crystal methamphetamine (or TIK) as it is commonly known is decimating communities across the country with the social and economic costs rocketing. Its effects are similar to that of communities in the West and East coast of the US when crack cocaine hit the streets. Its social effects are devastating. Families are broken up, children become involved in a life of crime and communities are generally torn apart in the process.

The effect of TIK in South Africa was no different.

The South African Police Services has been at the forefront of law enforcement methods and operations attempting to deal with the criminal activities of gang members. The involvement SAPS on its own has not been enough to stem the tide of young people gravitating towards gangs and drugs.

The socio-economic conditions in the country with homelessness, poverty, unemployment and dysfunctional families, have all in some small measure, contributed to the state of violence that we find ourselves in. The toxic environment and violent communities, in which young people find themselves in, in turn contribute to their social schooling in reproducing the toxic spiral of violence as Anthony Altbecker points out:

“Violence has become a cultural phenomenon. It is a form of behaviour driven by its own logic and attractive in its own right, one that is, for a significant minority, an expression of their selfhood, something towards which young men are drawn by the ‘enticement, or incitement, of the peer-group prestige’.”^{xv}

Many South African cities are affected by the gang problem, but it is essentially the big urban cities such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban,

Port Elizabeth, Pretoria and Kimberley that have borne the brunt of gang formation, gang violence and drug abuse over the last ten years.

Experience has shown that in working with gang members, any programmes directly associated with gangs such as mediation, conflict resolution or direct police intervention against gang strongholds has had the opposite effect of its intended action: it usually increases the social solidarity of the gang members. The individual gang members whether they were on the periphery of the gang or not, after such interventions, begin to see themselves much more as part of or identifying stronger with the gang. The identity of the structure and the individuals who claim to be part of the gang is greatly enhanced in the eyes of its members.

Many countries cited as having gang problems such the Puerto Rico, Mexico, the United States, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom all have similar problem when it comes to dealing with gangs. That is how to fight gangs without creating a reservoir of new recruits and potential recruits into the gang underworld.

7. Gang culture

It is necessary to understand how gang culture operates and functions in order to design successful business planning processes against it.

The underpinning of any successful anti-gang strategy should include the approaches to police culture, operational issues as well as attitudes to community policing.

Gang culture and activities impacts on policing strategies and policing culture, especially if there is no understanding of what this culture is. It becomes an essential component for any designer and planner to take account of what exists in terms of the gang culture. This contributes to the crime profile of the gang. It assists with the types of crimes that the gang perpetrates, the modus operandi as well as the major economic activities that they become involved in. Though not formal and prevalent in all, some gangs have particular cultural practices with respect to community support; women and their role; philosophy and world views; control, discipline and punishment; attitude and participation in the community they live in; leadership; inter-gang relations and associations; decision making and division of labour; location and geographical space which the gang claims. Not all gangs have all these characteristics and to a lesser extent some of them do not conform to this typology at all, while some of them have all of the characteristics present.

7.1 Community involvement and support

Most organized gangs attempt to get the community to support its illegal activities. It understands that it needs the support from men and women who live in the community to protect its criminal enterprise. If people are openly opposed to what they do, the gang will probably deal with them.

7.2 Attitude towards woman and ranks in the gang

Women are generally not in control of gangs as leaders. Where they are in control, the gang mostly consists of women such as the Cat Pounds. This is the exception rather than the rule. The roles and function of women has changed over the last few years though. Where previously women were seen to be supportive of men by keeping firearms, drugs and money; they now have a different role in some of the gangs. During the last few gang fights on the Cape Flats, women were reported to be part of the team perpetrating the shootings. This could indicate that women have generally progressed to the point where there is recognition that they have skills that can compete equally with that of some of the men.

7.3 Philosophy and world-view

Most gangs have a philosophy or world-view. They often are led by former members of prison gangs and adhere to the values that they have learnt whilst in prison. They are amoral but not immoral and will unconditionally defend themselves if attacked. While they are immoral when it comes to societal morals and values, they are not immoral towards their own members. They will on the other hand think nothing of killing a rival gang member and seek justification in the fact that they had to do it in order to survive. The world-view often states that the world is against them and they have to fend for themselves by cultivating opportunities for themselves.

7.4 Control, discipline and punishment

Organized formations of gangs have to rely on the discipline of its members if it is to succeed in the criminal economy. There has to be strict control over gang resources, activities of the members and necessary punishment for members who break the gang rules or protocol.

If it did not have rules and everyone did what they wanted to, the gang would not be a force to be reckoned with and this will reduce its effectiveness. Hence gangs have unwritten rules that members abide by.

7.5 Attitude and participation in the community

Gangs have become more sophisticated in the manner that they operate. Some gangs such as the Hard Livings and Sexy Boys have seen themselves as community workers in certain communities. This is done for purely opportunistic reasons and it is a measure by which they gain acceptance and respectability. Some of these gangs argue very strongly against attacking one's own community. Others argue that the community must be subservient to the needs of the gang.

7.6 Leadership

There still remains a very clear and discernable leadership structure in most gangs. There is a premium attached to being a leader in an organized gang.

It remains the responsibility of the leader to provide direction and give instructions to rank and file members. The notion of supreme leader is fast changing with gangs having opted for decentralization. Decentralization means that a second tier leadership is in place and new recruits are put out to run their

own sections of the gang. It becomes increasingly difficult to identify leaders of the gangs when decentralization sets in.

Not all of these factors are present in all the gangs on the Cape Flats. Most of the factors are mediated and expressed formally and informally in the manner in which the gang operates.

7.8 The move into the rural areas

Organized Cape Town gangs have started moving into the rural areas of the Western Cape Province as far back as 1995 for a number of reasons:

Firstly, police operations against high profile gang members have had the effect of gang leaders being harassed through continual raids and searches. They then leave the city and move to the rural areas in order to evade the continual focus and spotlight of police operations. They use these rural towns to lay low for a while before moving back into the metropole.

Secondly, it is a common known fact that when gang members have committed crimes in a community in the City, they retreat to the rural areas where they are unknown and go about their business unhindered.

Thirdly, they move to rural areas when they have been the targets of rival gangs, especially during gang wars. This move is only temporary and as soon as the dust dies down, they resurface in the city and its environs.

Fourthly, they have seen the opportunity to expand their business interest to the rural areas as it has a ready made captured market. In a sense, they are able to bring more resources to rural communities than local shebeen owners can muster. Because of their organizational skills, they are able to organize and control the youth of the towns very easily and quickly.

In view of this need to have a second home, especially for leadership figures, they have started to “invest” in a base within some of these towns. The effects of this have meant that it was necessary for them to recruit individuals and young people that will look after their interests when they returned to the city. This has necessitated some of these gang leaders starting branches of their gangs within some of these towns.

However, the anonymity afforded to them in these rural communities has fast changed in view of the rapidly expanding criminal activities and growth in their profile in the towns concerned. It has attracted the interest of the police agencies charged with dealing with gang leaders in the city.

The methodology that they use for recruitment is very effective. They usually buy property in the town and convert it into a place where young people are able to congregate by playing games and having access to liquor. This is usually in the poorer part of town and they are then able to recruit many of the youth, especially school-going and unemployed young people.

8. State Responses to Gangs

The response of the state has initially been disjointed and lacked clear objectives, failing to grasp the threat posed by gangs. It was only after 1996, when vigilantes emerged on the scene that the state got its act together to deal with the gangs. A vigilante organization called People against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) emerged in 1996 and promised to kill all drug dealers and gang leaders in the Province.

Their influence quickly spread around the country with branches being established in all the major centres of the country in different forms. They then threatened to kill the Minister of Justice.

By the end of 2008, over thirty senior gang leaders and drug dealers were executed^{xvi}. A war between vigilantes, gangsters and police ensued in the years 1996-2002. Many lives were lost and the Police started to launch operations against the gangs and vigilantes.

It was very difficult to police the gang and vigilante war because so much of the police resources were ploughed into policing vigilantes who by then had resorted to a campaign of urban terror to deal with gangsters. Pipe bombs were unleashed against the police and gangsters. Many police officers were injured and at least two police officers were killed in the line of duty and several others were injured.

After several attempts, the state finally passed the prevention of organized crime act (POCA) in 1998 which has a provision for asset forfeiture in the legislation. It also criminalizes gangs and makes it illegal to be associated with or be a member of a gang.

At the forefront of the provincial government's fight against gangs has been the recent decision to use Section 4 of the Prevention of Organized Crime Act (POCA), 1998, which criminalizes membership of street gangs. Despite the Act being passed in 1998, there has only recently been an effort to use POCA against street gangs.

POCA directly criminalizes associations with criminal gangs as well as the actual membership of street gangs. Section 9 of the Act criminalizes "any person who actively participates in or is a member of a criminal gang" and who is involved in criminal activities related to gangsterism. The MEC of Community Safety in the Western Cape warned children and youth against gang membership and noted that "24 cases against 33 members of most of the gangs (in the Western Cape are) pending in court" (Ramatlakane (2004, p.4).

The state has now adopted an approach that seeks to work with communities where gangs are prevalent. It has engaged local provincial departments such as the Department of Community Safety in the Western Cape to develop a provincial social transformation and gang prevention strategy (PSTGPS).

The strategy has taken from other strategies and pulled together a multi-disciplinary approach to gangs that involve a partnership with other government agencies and the community. In view of the fact that law enforcement approaches do not work, it has been proposed that a new social development approach is needed as the conditions that give rise to gangs in the first place, is still intact in the country. These include poverty, homelessness, and unemployment; low education levels and high school dropout rates. Coupled with restricted access to opportunity, it provides the perfect breeding ground for recruitment into gangs.

The new approach seek to minimize law enforcement approaches that appear not to have worked in major US cities as the report from the Justice Police Institute indicates:

"Los Angeles is a case in point. Author and former California state senator Tom Hayden reports that thousands of young people have been killed in Los Angeles gang conflicts despite decades of extremely aggressive gang enforcement. City and state officials have spent billions of dollars on policing and surveillance, on development of gang databases containing the names of tens of thousands of gang members, and on long prison sentences for gang members. Spending on gang enforcement has far outpaced spending on prevention programs or on improved conditions in communities where gang violence takes a heavy toll.

Los Angeles taxpayers have not seen a return on their massive investments over the past quarter century: law enforcement agencies report that there are now six times as many gangs and at least double the number of gang members in the region. In the undisputed gang capital of the U.S., more police, more prisons haven't stopped the cycle of gang violence. Los Angeles is losing the war on gangs. ^{xvii}

The report is emphatic on the role of law enforcement and its effects on gangs. It draws a number of surprising findings given the fact that it was an exhaustive process that involved research in a number of US cities known for having high gang members and incidents. The report makes the following observations about gang crime in the United States ^{xviii}:

1. There are fewer gang members in the United States today than there were a decade ago, and there is no evidence that gang activity is growing. ...Yet the most recent comprehensive law enforcement estimate indicate that youth gang membership fell from 850,000 in 1996 to 760,000 in 2004 and the proportion of jurisdictions reporting gang problems has dropped substantially.
2. There is no consistent relationship between law enforcement measures of gang activity and crime trends. One expert observes that gang membership estimates were at an all time high at the end of the 1990's, when youth violence fell to the lowest level in decades.
3. Gang members account for a relatively small share of crime in most jurisdictions
4. Gang members do not dominate or drive the drug trade. National drug enforcement sources claim that gangs are the "primary retail distributors of drugs in the country." But studies have of several jurisdictions have concluded that gang members account for a relatively small share of drug sales and that gangs do not generally seek to control drug markets.
5. The public face of the gang problem is black and brown, but whites make up the targets group of adolescent gang members. Law enforcement sources report that over 90 percent of gang members are non white, but youth survey data show whites account for 40 percent of adolescent gang members.
6. Most gang members join when they are young and quickly outgrow their gang affiliation without the help of the law enforcement or gang intervention programs.
7. Most youth who join gangs do so between the ages of 12 and 15, but the involvement of younger children in gangs is not new.
8. Leaving the gang early reduces the risk of negative life outcomes, but current policies make it more difficult for gang members to quit.
9. Police gang units are often formed for the wrong reasons and perceived as isolated and ineffectual by law enforcement colleagues.
10. Heavy handed suppression efforts can increase gang cohesion and police community tensions, and they have a poor track record when it comes to reducing crime and violence.
11. "Balanced" gang control strategies have been plagued by replication problems and imbalances between law enforcement and community stakeholders.
12. African American and Latino communities bear the cost of failed gang enforcement initiatives.
13. Expand the use of evidence based practice to reduce youth crime.
14. Promote jobs, education and healthy communities, and lower barriers to the integration into society of former gang members.
15. Redirect resources from failed gang enforcement efforts to proven public safety strategies.

Hence the strategy adopted by the Western Cape Province is marked different from anything they have tried before. Implicit is a recognition that the state alone cannot and will not be able to eradicate the culture and presence of gangs in the Province. It requires an integrated approach which has as its strategic thrust the ongoing engagement of youth and community members as part of a proactive strategy to diminish the influence of gangs, by making opportunities available to local youth.

It takes a comprehensive view with collaboration at all levels of government, including civil society and communities. The strategy aims to facilitate co-ordinated mechanisms and complimentary action to develop and implement sustainable initiatives in the targeted communities. Further, in order to have an impact on the proliferation of gangs in the long term, the strategy aims to promote a strong co-ordinated and long term approach to programme delivery by departments. Therefore the strategy identifies five key areas of interventions/pillars:

- Law enforcement and Crime Prevention
- Community capacity building and gang Intervention
- Prevention, Education and Re-integration
- Gang Information Dissemination and Research
- Intergovernmental Co-ordination

The strategy is founded on a heightened co-ordinated approach to law enforcement led by the Criminal Justice Sector (CJS) complimented by h focused social transformation projects and interventions with Social and Economic Sector Departments.

Its objectives include:

- To integrate law enforcement approaches with social development and social transformation initiatives of government and the community to reduce opportunities for gangs formation
- To rapidly respond to gang violence to stabilise communities
- To provide prevention, education and re-integration support systems for the targeted communities
- To effectively manage gang information to support the PSTGPS
- To ensure the co-ordinated action to implement the PSTGPS

9. Conclusion

Gang violence remains one of the single most important threats facing the Province and indeed some parts of the country. Lessons from South Africa show that there is no one size fits all when seeking solutions to the problem. It has become necessary to learn from the experiences of other countries in combating gangs. The culture is deeply entrenched in certain communities and it will require a generational change to impact gang culture. Children have to learn that gravitating towards gang culture is not an option. It is incumbent on governing authorities to have faith and confidence in civil society organizations as the research shows that nowhere in the world has government alone been able to successfully deal with gangs. It requires an integrated partnership between all the organs of the criminal justice sector, other auxiliary departments and civil society. Without such an approach any intervention to deal with is doomed to failure.

When dealing with the gang problem, we often make the mistake by thinking that the gangs are abnormal, from another planet, not part of “us”. On the contrary, they are members of communities, brothers, sisters, aunt’s husbands, children and wives. People like you and me. Any strategy that seeks to address this tendency will have to take this into account and not emphasize difference. This is what politicians use to make political capital and really there is a fine line between crime and politics.

Maybe the expression of Bertolt Brecht is apt in this respect:

The bourgeoisie’s fascination with bandits rests on a misconception: that a bandit is not a bourgeois. This misconception is the child of another misconception: that the bourgeois is not a bandit. Does this mean that they are identical? No: occasionally a bandit is not a coward^{xix}

Endnotes

- ⁱ Matza, D. *Delinquency and Drift*, Wiley, 1964; Downes, D. *The Delinquent Solution: A Study in Subcultural Theory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966
- ⁱⁱ See Van Onselen, C. *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand (1886-1914)* Volumes 1&2, Longman, 1982 and Steinberg, J., *The Number*, 2004, Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Materra, D., *Gone with the Twilight: A story of Sophiatown*, Zed Books, 1987
- ^{iv} Kinnes, I. *Old Communities, New Allegiances :Gangs and Migration*, 2003
- ^v Pinnock, D. and Douglas-Hamilton, D., *Gangs, Rituals and Rites of Passage*, Cape Town, African Sun Press, 1997.
- ^{vi} Ibid.
- ^{vii} Kinnes, I. *From street gangs to criminal empires: The changing face of gangs in the Western Cape*, ISS Monograph Series, No 48 , June 2000
- ^{viii} Pinnock, D. *The Brotherhoods, State Control and Gangs in Metropolitan Cape Town*, David Phillip Publishers, 1984
- ^{ix} Lotter, J.M., Schurink, W.J., *Gevangenisbendes: 'n Ondersoek met spesiale verwysing na nommerbendes onder Kleurlinggevangenes*, Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria, 1984
- ^x Kinnes, Schärf and Pinnock have all made estimates of the numbers of gang members although these figures require revision.
- ^{xi} Gastrow, P. *Organised Crime in South Africa*, ISS Monograph Series, no 28, August 1998
- ^{xii} James C. Howell, (2006) *The Impact of Gangs on Communities* (NYGC Bulletin, August 2006), in OJJDP Bulletin , no 2
- ^{xiii} In his book, *Organised Crime- A view from the Cape Flats*, Andre Standing takes issue with this view and argues that gangs are not as organised as they are made out to be.
- ^{xiv} *National Drug Master Plan*, Drug Advisory Board, Department of Welfare and Population Development, February 1999
- ^{xv} Altbeker, A (2007) *A country at war with itself: South Africa's Crisis of Crime*, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, p119
- ^{xvi} Kinnes, I., *The Hard Livings: The Impact of political and social transformation to Democracy on the gang in Manenberg(1992-1998)*, unpublished Master's thesis, London School of Economics, 1999
- ^{xvii} Greene, J and Pranis, K. *Gang Wars: The Failure of Enforcement Tactics and the Need for Effective Public Strategies*, Justice Policy Institute, July 2007
- ^{xviii} Ibid
- ^{xix} Bertolt Brecht: *The Threepenny Opera*, London, 1979, Mathuen, 92