Urban Youth

in the Pacific

Increasing resilience and reducing risk for involvement in crime and violence
MATALA

In this LIFE I say I’m living
My every beat and EVERY breath
Strikes as a constant clear reminder
to LIVE before my death.
I am fearless against daily struggles
Communicate with the pain
We are all in this TOGETHER
One twisted and unified vein.
Let your DREAMS explode into color
Shades of hope, love and UNITY
To paint and weave your canvas
Of your UNIQUE Identity.
For in this life that we ALL are living
In every beat there is a choice
Life is a SONG for us to join in
You’re not alone, harmonize,
use your VOICE.

Matala is Tongan for ‘flower’ (noun) or ‘to bloom’ (verb). This definition reflects the potential and resilience of Pacific youth and the need to nurture and support their growth from the roots. When written in another form, namely, ‘Fakamatala’ it means ‘to explain or clarify’ representing the importance of having the voice of youth present in discussions about youth issues. In other Pacific languages matala also has other significant meanings. In Uvean it means ‘to tell’ and in Samoan ‘opening’.

Front cover image and accompanying poem by Minaira K. Fifita, ON THE SPOT (Inc)
Acrylic on Canvas
March 2011, Nuku’alofa, Tonga
Urban Youth in the Pacific

Increasing resilience and reducing risk for involvement in crime and violence

June 2011
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Foreword

Youth involvement in urban crime and violence in the Pacific is a topic that has received increased attention over the last few years. Tasked by the Forum Region Security Committee (FRSC), this is the first study to focus exclusively on the issue regionally and we welcome it as a contribution to policy and programme development.

This report is timely not only in terms of addressing this emerging regional issue, but also because 2011 is the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Many of today’s Pacific leaders were youth when PIF was founded as the South Pacific Forum in 1971. Now is the moment for these leaders to reflect back on their own time as youth and to consider how young people can be better supported to prevent their involvement in crime and violence, and lead productive and responsible lives.

The Leaders’ Vision in the Pacific Plan states that “the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all of its people can lead free and worthwhile lives.” Even with the relatively narrow UN definition of youth as 15 to 24 year olds, youth make up a substantial 20 percent of the Pacific population. They have the potential to drive economic development, lead on good governance, and perpetuate cultural practices. However, this potential is not being harnessed. As this study notes, the socio-economic and political marginalization of youth have consistently been identified as one of the underlying factors which contribute to the adoption of negative behaviours. In short, unless youth are given the opportunities to participate more actively in society, the Leaders’ Vision cannot be fulfilled.

The Framework in this study developed by the research team for identifying risk and resilience factors that shape whether youth will become involved in crime and violence or not, is a useful tool to understanding the complex context in which young people develop into adults. Together with the concrete recommendations, the study gives stakeholders a range of options to tackle the issue of youth crime and violence. Although far from complete we trust readers will at least find the study a useful reference and a stimulating starting point for further ideas and approaches to tackle youth crime and violence. Resources will have to mobilized, but the high return on investment in youth in the long term in terms of development gains and cost savings has been proven time and time again.

The study is the result of both the evolving strategic partnership between the UNDP and PIFS, and of an effective partnership with financial and technical support from UNESCO, UNICEF, SPC, Pacific Youth Council, ILO and UNFPA as multi-lateral, regional intergovernmental and civil society organizations. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the cooperation extended by governments and civil society for the research done in each urban centre. Your participation in the initial research and feedback workshops were indispensable for this study.

Lastly and importantly to the young people who participated in this study; thank you for your inputs. We hope that this report faithfully captures your voice, situation and needs on the issue on youth crime and violence.

Tuiloma Neroni Slade     Garry Wiseman
Secretary General      Manager
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat    UNDP Pacific Centre
Endorsement of the Key Guiding Principles for Preventing Youth Involvement in Crime and Violence by the FRSC

Key Guiding Principles for preventing youth involvement in crime and violence across the Pacific were enthusiastically endorsed in June 2011 by the principal political security and governance forum in the region, the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC). The Principles are based on the regional findings and recommendations of this report on Urban Youth in the Pacific and they cover the broad range of factors that can contribute to the prevention of youth involvement in crime and violence. The FRSC also noted the recommendations, which are summarized below each of the Principles, as a contribution and reference for policy formulation and programme implementation for preventing and responding to youth crime and violence in the region. In endorsing the Principles, countries of the Forum support the Principles as a foundation for tackling youth involvement in crime and violence. Countries may use the Principles as a starting point when formulating policies and programmes for young people at risk of involvement in crime and violence in their countries. Moreover, as a result of this report and other recent complementary studies and initiatives, the FRSC recommended that the challenges facing youth should be a matter for Pacific Island Leaders attention at the 2011 Leaders Meeting in Auckland in early September. Decisions reached by Forum Leaders are outlined in the annual Forum Communiqué from which policies are developed and a work programme is prepared.

Let us hope that the challenges facing young people today are recognized by Leaders and under their directive the Principles are used as basis for genuine policy and programming initiatives to increase resilience and reduce risk of involvement in crime and violence by urban youth in the Pacific.

Chairman of the 2011 FRSC and Papua New Guinea High Commissioner to Fiji
Peter Eafeare
July 2011

Principles

1) Mainstream youth issues as a cross cutting theme in the regional development and security architecture.
   Youth issues need to be not only tackled by specialized regional civil society organizations such as the Pacific Youth Council but through policy and programming as an important cross cutting issue in inter-governmental regional institutions, plans and forums such as the Pacific Plan, the Pacific Youth Strategy, FRSC, and the Pacific Forum Leaders Meeting. Tracking mechanisms on regional and national commitments by officials to youth issues also need to be better established especially around the Pacific Youth Strategy.

2) Adopt committed whole-of-government approaches to youth issues, especially youth crime and violence.
   Whole of government approaches includes incorporating youth issues across sectors in national development plans and national budgets. Moreover, not only the justice ministry, but also other sectors such as education, social affairs and labour need to commit to youth issues to decrease the probability of their involvement in crime and violence. Tracking and evaluation of national youth policy implementation and better data on youth will be critical for the successful adoption of whole-of-government approaches.
3) Foster participation of young people in decision-making.  
Promoting youth voice and participation in substantive decision making processes at the community, national and regional levels is needed to ensure that adequate and appropriate consideration of youth perspectives are incorporated. Youth are not only the future, but are also the present and giving them a voice in decision making through actions such as engagement with legislators, involvement in parliamentary committees, and in youth parliaments will empower them and foster leadership. Supporting initiatives led by young promoting crime prevention and peace building, and ensuring the participation of young women are particularly important part of access to decision making.

4) Improve justice sector responses to youth crime and ensure that responses include rehabilitation.  
Juvenile justice responses across the Pacific are mixed bag; best practices and appropriate legislation exist but they must be more consistent throughout the region. Juvenile justice legislation needs to be established where there is none and cooperation between civil society and faith-based service providers and government for rehabilitation of offenders can be improved. Better counselling services, gender sensitive handling of offenders, and segregated facilities especially for young people away from adult detainees are all part of an improved response.

5) Improve the relevance and quality of education outcomes.  
Ensuring that education outcomes align with job market demands at the domestic and international level to increase the probability of young people finding decent employment is vital for reducing youth involvement in crime and violence. Moreover, providing second-chance education for out-of-school young people will help them to build self-esteem, increase their employability and decrease the probability of their involvement in crime and violence. Life skills, financial literacy and entrepreneurship should be added to curriculums and the stigma around technical and vocational education and training in some island nations needs to be addressed.

6) Develop targeted employment opportunities and meaningful activities for young people.  
To establish a better environment for youth employment and meaningful activity, multiple entry points are required including: establishing youth employment as a standing agenda item at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting, incorporating it in national development plans; developing national and regional youth employment action plans; increasing knowledge of emerging job market needs; creating opportunities for volunteerism, sports, positive recreation, and work experience; and, expanding support for entrepreneurship. As well as employment the importance of meaningful activity in building resilience to crime and violence in young people should not be underestimated.

7) Tackle risk factors in society that are negatively influencing young people.  
Substance abuse, violent home environments, and confusing new societal roles for adults and young people forged by accelerated rates of change are negatively influencing young people and increasing the probability of their involvement in crime and violence. Moreover, while the return of a small percentage of deportees increase the sophistication of crime in island nations, the vast majority of deportees endure discrimination and a lack of support. Providing support and building the capacity of families and communities to adjust to this new environment and tackle these risk factors is essential.

8) Harness the expertise and effectiveness of CSOs and FBOs in partnerships for the prevention of and response to youth crime and violence.  
Partnership and cooperation between government, civil society organizations and faith based organizations for the prevention of and response to youth crime and violence issues is working well on a limited scale in a number of Pacific nations such as Tonga and RMI. However, this needs to be expanded and better formalized. Further trust between the government, CSOs and FBOs needs to be built and the fact that in many cases CSOs and FBOs are better placed as service providers than government needs to be more widely recognized. On a regional level the Pacific Youth Council has an extensive network and is well placed to cooperate with regional inter-governmental organizations.
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Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Accelerated Boot Camp (RMI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>AusAID</td>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Community Based Corrections (PNG)</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>CMI</td>
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<td>CROP</td>
<td>Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>CYP</td>
<td>Commonwealth Youth Programme</td>
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<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith Based Organization</td>
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<td>FEMM</td>
<td>Forum Economic Ministers Meeting</td>
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<td>Forum Regional Security Committee</td>
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<td>FSM</td>
<td>Federated States of Micronesia</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>I-YEL</td>
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<td>LNG</td>
<td>Liquid Natural Gas (PNG)</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MIEPI</td>
<td>Marshall Islands Epidemiology and Prevention Initiatives (RMI)</td>
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<td>MOTEYS</td>
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<td>MWYCF</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<td>RAMSI</td>
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<td>SGBV</td>
<td>sexual and gender based violence</td>
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<td>TVET</td>
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<td>Yumi Lukautim Mosbi (You and Me Looking After Port Moresby)</td>
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