

Poverty alleviation and violence prevention: Exploring the impact of the Community Work Programme

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Introduction

- Recurring question in South Africa concerns the relationship between factors like poverty, unemployment, inequality and violence.
- Linked to this are questions about the relationship between job creation or poverty alleviation initiatives and the prevention of violence.
- This presentation discusses some emerging theoretical issues regarding a study of a poverty alleviation initiative – the community work programme (CWP) – and its impact on violence.

Background

- CSVR research into collective violence over 2009 -2010, led to report 'The Smoke that Calls' (2011).
- Report provides seven case studies, 6 dealing with communities affected by collective violence
 - Not just issues of 'service delivery'.
 - Relationships of patronage a key factor
- The 7th case study deals with a community called Bokfontein characterised by the absence of collective violence notwithstanding 'a lack of basic services'.
- Based on research conducted in Bokfontein the study concludes that the Community Work Programme was a crucial factor in ensuring the communities resilience against violence.

New CSVR study

- New CSVR study focused on the CWP:
 - Does the CWP in other communities contribute to the prevention of violence?
 - If so how should the contribution of the CWP to preventing violence be understood?
- The study forms part of the International Development Research Centre's Safe and Inclusive Cities (SAIC) programme

This presentation

- The CWP
- Question of role of research & criminalisation.
- Job creation and the prevention of violence.
- The gender dimensions of the CWP – implications for violence against women.
- Relationship between social cohesion and inclusion.
- Accountability, transparency, state legitimacy and civil inclusion.

Community Work Programme

- Poverty alleviation programme falling under COGTA;
- Participants do two days of work per week (100 per year) at R67 per day.
- Programme is community based:
 - CWP ‘sites’ are located in communities;
 - Each site provides work for 1000 or more participants
 - Participants should be from that community.
 - Work that is chosen should be informed by consultation with community about community needs.
- Sites managed by ‘Implementing Agents’ (NGOS) though local councillors and other supposed to serve on ‘reference committee’ involved in decisions about type of work & location of CWP projects etc.

Typical CWP projects

- Agricultural work - the development of food gardens
- Home-based care including cooking and cleaning for households affected by HIV and AIDS and other illnesses, care of orphans, child-headed households, the elderly & sick.
- Cleaning, making and maintaining access and secondary roads, constructing and renovating public facilities such as schools and clinics, repairs to water and sanitation facilities, and creating and maintaining community parks.
- Support to crèches, pre-schools and schools, including teacher assistants, helping with extra-curricular activities such as sports, youth recreation, cooking and distributing food, and school security.
- Crime and violence prevention activities such as community patrols and the clearing of long grass in crime hot spots.
- Social programmes to tackle alcohol abuse.
- Development of recreation spaces & sporting facilities targeting youth

CWP and violence prevention

- Are at least 3 ways in which CWP may contribute to preventing violence.
 1. Providing work – addressing root causes of violence (poverty etc).
 2. Activities that enhance safety (e.g. Patrols) or have other benefits in preventing crime (e.g. Support to early childhood or youth development).
 3. **Primary focus of research** - proximate causes of violence – building trust in relation to government (civic cohesion) or other members of the community (social cohesion)

Role of research - criminalising the CWP?

- At some sites work that is done is targeted at questions of crime or violence prevention and safety.
- Examples – cutting long grass in crime ‘hot spots’, patrols.
- However one of the defining features of work that is done is supposed to be that it responds to issues that are prioritised by community members.
- Project not necessarily intended to prioritise ‘violence prevention’ as a focus of work.
- Crime/violence prevention should not be assumed to take priority over other goals of social policy – such as food security or the provision of care.
- But there are circumstances where it is appropriate to prioritise crime & violence prevention

Job creation and the prevention of violence.

- Generally – improvements in employment assumed to reduce (property) crime – though are factors that may undermine this relationship:
 - For instance improvement in economic conditions may also be associated with changed opportunity factors (e.g. more consumer goods in circulation)
- No linear relationship between (un)employment and violence (prevention)
- Dual labour market – much work increasingly informalised and insecure.
- Questions about significance of latter type of work in context of high levels of inequality
- Benefits of work not only financial - also e.g. relationships, status.
 - But some work may be experienced as demeaning – have negative impacts on self-worth.

The CWP & violence against women

- Profile of CWP participants – 70% female.'
- CWP therefore has some benefits in empowering some of the most disadvantaged women.
- As with other measures that advance gender equality – it therefore potentially disrupts power relationships.
 - From perspective in terms of which gender violence is a manifestation of patriarchy – this has long term benefits in moving towards equity in relationships that are currently relationships of domination.
- But mixed evidence regarding short term implications:
- Some evidence that households where female partner but not male partner employed more prone to domestic violence – though there are studies that contradict this.
- In so far as providing employment and status for men reduces their susceptibility to violence – profile of participants suggests that this may not be primary relevance to understanding role of CWP in addressing violence.

Relationship between social cohesion and inclusion

- Concept of social cohesion can be applied at community or societal level.
- SC sometimes defined as based on 'inclusion':
- CDI study – CWP supports some forms of economic and social inclusion (within communities).
- However – economically this is at level of '2nd economy'.
- Depending on reference points used CWP may therefore be understood to support inclusion – or as perpetuating dual economy and relationships of inequality within society.
- Raises questions about exclusion and violence – CWP may support a form of inclusion at the communal level
- But if violence is connected to society wide inequality – suggests there may be limits to its impact on this

Accountability, transparency, state legitimacy and civic inclusion

- Issue here is whether CWP promotes greater trust in government?
- What are the issues: transparency? Accountability? Consultation?
- Key issue – recruitment of participants?
- ‘Smoke that calls – use of local power networks as instruments of patronage a key cause of violence.
- To what degree is the CWP subject to these same dynamics?
- But by its nature CWP may enable patronage to be disbursed more broadly than e.g. municipal jobs, procurement opportunities.
- Also those who attach value to CWP opportunities – different class ‘poorest of the poor’.
- Even if shaped by patronage may not cause violence?

Conclusion

- CWP capacity to contribute to preventing violence in various ways:
- However there may be limits on the degree to which CWP should be seen as an instrument of violence prevention:
 - To the degree that work is experienced as demeaning;
 - To the degree that there is a tendency to denigrate the CWP on the part of community members.
 - To the degree that participants own definitions of inclusion are defined by '1st economy' rather than '2nd economy' standards.
 - In the short term in so far as it disrupts domestic power relationships characterised by insecure masculinity.
 - In so far as it serves as an instrument of patronage.
- Key issue is 'status' enjoyed by the CWP within communities. This may vary between one community and another depending on different factors.