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The Cowardly Man Raises his Children:

Refugee Gang Violence and Masculine Norms in Cairo

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Cover Photo: Hay el Ashr Market, Cairo. Photo by Paul Miranda

The “Cowardly man” in the title comes from a Sudanese and South Sudanese Arabic proverb and refers to the man who does not respond to insults by fighting. It means he will live and be able to raise his children, whereas the man who responds with aggression will be killed .

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Introduction

This report analyzes the gang violence affecting some refugee communities in Cairo and the ways in which young people’s conceptions of masculinity fuel the problem. We assess the potential for using the Cure Violence (CV) model for violence reduction and explore developing a prevention program based on transforming the masculine norms that support violence and gangs.

The report begins by exploring the sources and drivers of gang conflict across Nuba Sudanese¹ and South Sudanese neighborhood groups and crews and how revenge and retaliation lead to cycles of violence. First, we review the multiple types of violence that Sudanese and South Sudanese youth experience throughout their life and how these experiences lead to gang violence. In particular, we focus on how hypermasculine and patriarchal norms reproduce violence. The next section explains the CV model and assesses its applicability in Cairo. We also highlight refugee communities’ grassroots efforts to reduce violence and show how these efforts, while fragmented due to a lack of support, have had tangible positive effects. The community efforts demonstrate the need to combine external support and meaningful participation of communities in efforts to address these issues. We end with recommendations for how to implement the CV and masculinity approaches in Cairo’s refugee-hosting neighborhoods and other pathways to consider for violence prevention.

Research Methods

Our qualitative field research drew primarily on conversations with local people and interviews with key informants conducted between June and September 2019. We selected individuals based on their knowledge of or direct experience with gang violence and gang-affiliated youth in Cairo. The interviews followed a rough outline and went for about two to three hours, with questions changing over the course of our research as we learned more and dove deeper into the topics. These semi-structured interviews were complemented by ethnographic observation by co-author Paul Miranda, who spent many evenings “hanging out”² with our research assistants and their friends in their neighborhoods and attending community events. Paul speaks fluent Egyptian Arabic, has lived in Cairo for more than four years, and is familiar with the refugee context in Egypt, having worked as a caseworker and program manager with a refugee agency in Cairo. He is the same age as many of the young men whose views and experiences we were interested in. We reached our key informants through our Cairo networks using different entry points. Our refugee field researchers drew on people they knew in community-based

¹ While there are Darfurian youth involved in gangs in areas like Ain Shams, gang activity is primarily concentrated among South Sudanese and Nuba Sudanese youth. As such, when we refer to “Sudanese” we mean Nuba Sudanese unless stated differently. According to 2016 UNHCR statistics, 25% of the registered Sudanese population in Cairo were Nuba, 20% were Fur, and the remaining 55% were divided among other Sudanese ethnicities, making the Nuba the largest Sudanese group in Cairo.

² See <https://www.fmreview.org/return-reintegration/rodders>.

organizations (CBOs), tribal associations, community schools, and churches to build out our list. Paul used his prior work network to contact community refugee groups and well-known refugee organizations in Cairo such as PSTIC,³ StARS,⁴ and the St. Andrew’s United Church pastors. In March 2019, we held a Refugees in Towns (RIT) workshop in Cairo on community violence with refugee service providers including international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as pastors from Sudanese and South Sudanese churches in Cairo. We also drew on the findings of an earlier RIT study on Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.⁵

In total, we interviewed 31 Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees in Central North Cairo, Nasr City, Maadi, and Barajil. We added three Eritrean informants to get some idea of how the presence of gangs affects another refugee nationality. We also interviewed six key informants from refugee service providers in Cairo (see Table 1). To maintain our informants’ confidentiality, we refer to them by their role and neighborhood. We refer to community associations as “tribal associations” rather than by their identifying names.

Table 1. Refugee interviewees n = 34 (32 interviews)		
Nationality	Male	Female
Sudanese	7	2
South Sudanese	19	3
Eritrean	3	
Key informants (individuals occupy multiple roles)		
Pastors	10	
CBO or tribal association leadership	11	
School directors and teachers	5	
Community activists ⁶	4	
Former gang members	7	
Service provider caseworkers	3	
Neighborhoods		
Central North Cairo: Ain Shams, Helmeyet el Zeitoun, Ezbet el Nakhl, Abbassia	18	
Nasr City: Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus	6	
Maadi	6	
Barajil	1	
Service provider key informants from these organizations: PSTIC, Save the Children, StARS, UNFPA ⁷		

³ PSTIC is the Psycho-Social Services and Training Institute in Cairo.

⁴ StARS is St. Andrew’s Refugee Services.

⁵ See Miranda and Jacobsen, 2018. Available at:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599720dc59cc68c3683049bc/t/5c8f8e42f4e1fca54371a34f/1552911964037/Tufts+Cairo+Program+Proposal>. This 2018 research was based on 31 unstructured key informant interviews concentrated in Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

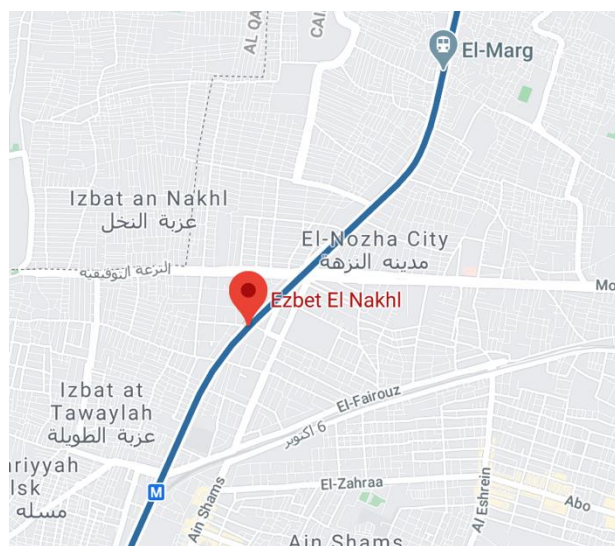
⁶ Community activists are people who are trying to address challenges in their communities but do not occupy formal positions in CBOs, traditional tribal structures, churches, or schools. They often have day jobs with organizations in Cairo—PSTIC, StARS—or as interpreters for UNHCR. They undertake their initiatives on their own, but often work alongside the churches, CBOs, schools, and tribal associations.

⁷ UNFPA is United Nations Population Fund.

Our field research team comprised four men: one of the authors (Paul, a white American), a Nuba-Sudanese refugee and a Somali refugee who both live in Hay el Ashr, and a Nigerian-American masters student who lives in Tabba (adjacent to Hay el Ashr) and previously lived in South Sudan for three years. Our team did not include a woman, which was a serious limitation and error, as discussed below. Another omission was that most of our key informants were men but did not include any traditional tribal leaders or elders. There are women-led Sudanese and South Sudanese community groups in Cairo, one of which is particularly concerned with issues of domestic violence, but we failed to connect with them.

Limitation of our Research: Girls' Experiences

The lack of women on our team and our inability to connect with women-led refugee groups meant we could not fully explore how gangs affect the girls and young women growing up in these neighborhoods. Nor were we able to delve into the lives of girl gang members. However, our informants hinted at issues of gender-based violence (GBV) that are somewhat hidden to humanitarian agencies. Agency reports suggest that girls and young women face high levels of GBV both from their own communities and from local Egyptians.⁸ However, our interviewees usually referred to this issue as “early pregnancies” among teenagers rather than GBV. While some of these “early pregnancies” were girl gang members, many were not, suggesting that GBV is not simply a gang-related issue. Research in other contexts highlights how recurrent violence can harden masculinities and lead to further violence. It is possible that recurrent gang violence (in addition to other forms of violence affecting refugees) could contribute to high rates of GBV. These issues require further research, particularly if effective programming is to be developed.



Ezbet el Nakhl neighborhood in Cairo. Image from Google maps

⁸ In 2019, organizations in Cairo noted a rise in the rate of reported GBV incidents, rape in particular, utilization of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits, and GBV case management services, especially among younger women and girls, most of whom were Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali. No perpetrator data exist as medical providers and organizations do not collect them, but the highest concentrations of survivors were located in the areas known to be most affected by the presence of gangs, the areas of our research focus.

Gang Violence in Egypt—Sources and Drivers

Gang violence in Cairo is of two main types: street robbery and conflict between or within gangs or sub-groups of gangs (“crews”). Our interviewees emphasized the interpersonal nature of the gang violence. While group leaders sometimes order their members to target individuals or to “go out and ‘collect’ 10 phones” to generate money, it is usually “trivial things like anger, jealousy, and rivalries” between members or groups that lead to outbursts of violence.⁹ Reasons include rivalry related to money, perceived slights and insults to honor or respect, lingering anger over past conflicts, territory disputes (e.g., group members present in a rival group’s territory), romantic relationships, and splintering into smaller crews resulting in conflict over leadership.



In Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus, two Nuba tribal association leaders explained that “our young people here, they’ll resort to violence for the smallest things, the most minimum things set off violence.” The younger children, 12 or 13 years old, “They get upset about something and create conflicts or disputes, which then drags in the older boys who create more violence.”¹⁰ But once the community leaders get

⁹ Interview with a community activist, Abbassia. Clearly, these issues are not “trivial” to those involved in gang life. But many of our interviewees often referred to the reasons underlying gang-related disputes and conflicts this way (*tafeh/43L*).

¹⁰ Some interviewees in Ain Shams and the adjoining Central North areas noted that the younger members are more prone to violence. One former gang member from Zeitoun said that “deep down, I tell you, a lot of these guys don’t want to fight anymore.” But there are tensions between the older and younger members: “The younger members, the teenagers, they don’t listen to the older ones.” Another former gang member from Ain Shams said

involved, they “realize that the original problem was something simple, it’s always about a girl or something [small] like this.” For example, if someone from Ashr is beaten, even for a phone, the Ashr group must retaliate. Many in Ain Shams observed similar trends. For example, the young people, “start violence for very simple or trivial things and sometimes from nothing,” but these disputes can result in serious violence that is not easy to resolve. While some members are against the use of violence, “others solve all their issues with violence,” and “Once violence breaks out, it spreads.”¹¹ As a former gang member from Helmeyet el Zeitoun put it, “We never fought because we believed in something or had any goals, we only did it to gain power, respect, and to protect the area from other gangs.”¹²

Territorial conflict is often a route to violence. For example, if youth from Zeitoun are spotted in Ain Shams for whatever reason, fights and violent conflict could break out. If gang-affiliated youth enter rival territory to rob, it can lead to violence, especially if they

rob another gang-affiliated individual, which means the harmed group must seek retaliation.¹³ If there is a wedding in Zeitoun, but someone from the Ain Shams group attends because his relatives live in Zeitoun, this is seen as a provocation and could lead to violence.¹⁴ If a



family moves between different gang neighborhoods and the teenage children are gang affiliated and move with the family, this could lead to conflict.¹⁵ Previous histories of violence and lingering resentment overlap with territorial rivalry and are a source of conflict. For example, in Araba wa Nus, a few days before our interview with two local leaders, a gang member spotted a young man from Ashr with whom he previously had a dispute. The Araba wa Nus man gathered fellow members, and they severely beat the Ashr man.¹⁶ The two leaders noted that this type of violence was a common occurrence. A CBO leader in Barajil explained, if “they’re walking down the street and run into someone who they think has wronged them in the past, they will think, now it’s time for him to pay and they will

there are sub-groups in Ain Shams made up of young teenagers who are more violent. These young ones, “They’re so violent, the big kids use them to commit violence because they’re so eager to do it... These younger kids, they sleep on the street under cars.”

¹¹ Interview with a pastor/school director, Ain Shams.

¹² Beliefs related to masculinity and manhood, projecting power, demanding respect, and showing strength, for example, play a major role in fueling gang-related conflict and help explain why some young men get involved in the first place. We will return to this point in the section on masculinity.

¹³ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams. “If Maadi boys go to Ain Shams to rob, and the Ain Shams boys see them, they have to fight them and chase them out.”

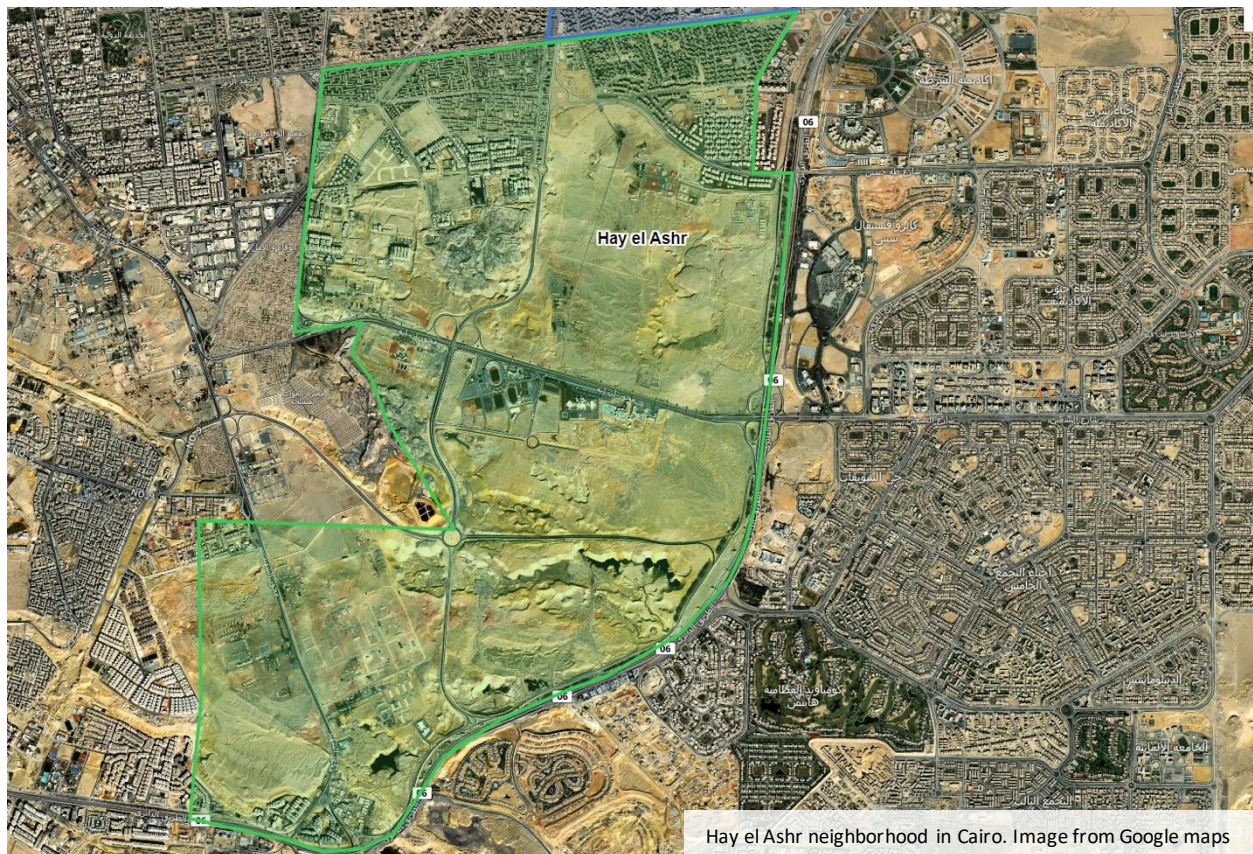
¹⁴ Interview with a pastor/school director, Ain Shams.

¹⁵ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

¹⁶ Interview with two Nuba tribal association chairpersons, Ashr. As they explained, the young man was resting at home for multiple days following the attack due to the severity of the beating.

attack him, most likely with weapons.” This kind of violence, she noted, does not require any orders from group leaders.

Disputes also arise with parties or local music. A former Maadi gang member recalled how a rapper from a Maadi sub-group recorded songs that insulted another Maadi sub-group, who responded with their own songs, which led to violent confrontations. A rapper and former gang member in Ain Shams said he specifically tells other rappers that he won’t collaborate with them if they “try to rep their gangs in the music.” It’s common for neighborhood groups or sub-groups to hold large parties in rented locations or apartments. If different groups or sub-groups are present, fights can break out between members, particularly if a member makes an advance on another member’s girlfriend. Sometimes rival groups attack each other’s parties and try to violently break them up.



“Girls” were one of the most commonly cited sources of violence. Boys and young men justify the use of violence in response to perceived advances on “their” women, reflecting widespread patriarchal and hypermasculine norms. If a teenage girl from Araba wa Nus has a relationship with a gang-affiliated boy from Ashr, the Araba wa Nus group is likely to go after the Ashr group as they see the relationship as a provocation.¹⁷ A former gang member from Maadi explained that it was common for conflicts to break out when gang members uploaded pictures of themselves with girls from rival territory on social media. The rival group felt “provoked and carried out violent attacks” in retribution.¹⁸ When relationships end

¹⁷ Interview with a pastor/school director, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

¹⁸ Interview with a former gang member, Maadi.

and girls start dating other boys, it can also lead to conflict.¹⁹ In one example, a gang-affiliated young man was resettled with his family in Sweden. After he was resettled, his former girlfriend started to date a boy from another neighborhood. When the young man found out, he told his gang brothers in Cairo, who then went after the boy. The fact that the boy “was a church boy, university student, and not gang affiliated” didn’t matter. The gang members tracked him down and severely beat him. As the pastor explained, “Fights always start over things like this, competition and conflict over girls and then they come and stab you, maybe even break into your house.”²⁰ Alternatively, multiple gang-affiliated young men from different neighborhoods or sub-groups may become interested in a young woman or teenage girl. But, as a pastor from Ain Shams explained, “she can only accept one.” Once she starts dating one of them, if the others continue to approach her, she may call her boyfriend and his group will fight the other group. This is particularly the case when sisters of rival group members are involved. “They’ll never allow their sisters to hang out with anyone whether from their group or from another group.”²¹ Once teenage girls and young women start dating a gang member, she’s considered part of the group:

“You join them for all their activities, hanging out on the street and partying and drinking...Back in the day the girls carried the knives for the boys to church since the security searched the boys, but not the girls, the girls could smuggle knives into the church if needed.”²²

Groups will occasionally have female members lure rivals into an ambush under the pretense of “meeting up.” Whether groups seek retribution against girls for dating boys from rival territory was less clear. Such retribution was not commonly referenced in our interviews.

Sub-Groups versus Neighborhood Groups

Over the years, neighborhood gangs have split into sub-groups, which complicates attempts to intervene in gang violence. In the late aughts, there were two primary Sudanese and South Sudanese groups, the Lost Boys and the Outlaws. One former gang member noted that in his time, Ain Shams, Zeitoun, Ashr, Araba wa Nus, Maadi, and el-Marj were under the control of one group and Abbassia, Faisal, and Saraya al Quba were controlled by another group. This centralization made it easier to mediate if conflicts emerged,²³ and group leaders strongly resisted “any new ideas” or sub-groups.²⁴ But now there is more fragmentation. Some neighborhood sub-groups operate under the name of the Outlaws (or the Lost Boys), but they have their own goals and are not united with the larger group.²⁵ One former gang member said he was part of the “CL Boys”²⁶ in Ain Shams who did not adhere to the truces negotiated between the Lost Boys and the Outlaws.

¹⁹ Interview with a pastor/school director, Ain Shams.

²⁰ Interview with a pastor/school director, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

²¹ Interview with a former gang member, Zeitoun.

²² Interview with a former female gang member, Ain Shams.

²³ Interview with a former gang member, Zeitoun.

²⁴ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

²⁵ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

²⁶ The CL stands for “California Law,” but Paul has usually heard the group referred to as the CL Boys.



Fragmentation can go all the way down to the street level. In Ain Shams, one street is controlled by two crews; each control half the street. Our informants said there are four or five sub-groups in Ain Shams, Nasr City, or Maadi, each with its own territory. Some sub-groups have different reputations. For example, one sub-group in Zahraa is known to be into drugs,²⁷ whereas a sub-group in Ain Shams called “Show me the Money” are “robbers, not fighters.”²⁸ A former gang member in Maadi said the formation of a sub-group can lead to violence if there are disputes about leadership or with the original group. But while the sub-groups fight each other, they will also unite against groups from different neighborhoods or to carry out revenge attacks. Sub-group members “want to be the king of Maadi [or their areas], they

want to show the others, I’m powerful and you’re nothing.”²⁹ Each sub-group wants to dominate their neighborhood, so while the immediate reason for a conflict may be “one of the small things like girls or money,” the “overarching goal is domination.”³⁰

Cycles of Revenge Attacks

Revenge attacks can fuel a cycle of violence and escalate the severity and frequency of violence. The desire for revenge is underpinned by conceptions of manhood and group and societal norms, (explored in the masculinity section below) and, gang-involved or not, is widespread. A community activist in Ain Shams said,

“If you get stabbed, all that runs in your mind is revenge. But, in the end, you may not find the exact guy who stabbed you, so you’ll do the same thing to someone else. People say, oh you’re like them, so I’ll get you.”

But targeting the wrong person leads to more violence as that person will then seek revenge and often join a neighborhood group to do so.³¹ A former gang member said revenge attacks were organized by his

²⁷ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

²⁸ Interview with a pastor/school director, Ain Shams.

²⁹ Interview with a community activist, Maadi.

³⁰ Interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

³¹ A former gang member pointed out that while he’s witnessed many incidents where the wrong person was targeted in a revenge attack, there are instances where the gang will seek to make amends. He noted that in these instances, all the gang members who were present at the time of the attack will go to the victim’s house and offer an official apology to prevent further violence. Interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

group against “any act that touched our dignity and honor” or “any previous act of violence against one of our members.” To carry the revenge attack out, they organized themselves and “carried as many weapons [as they] could.” If they found the target among his friends, they would attack everyone. If they failed to carry out an attack, they would try again and “insist on taking [their] revenge.” Some informants said revenge attacks are not as bad as in earlier years when “groups of 20 or more were fighting each other in the street,”³² but the potential for revenge to fuel cycles of violence is still present.

Robbery versus Gang Conflict

Much of the robbery that takes place in the streets does not target gang members and affects other refugee nationalities. Our three Eritrean informants all said the youth in their communities are affected by robbery from Sudanese and South Sudanese youth gangs. Some worried about the potential for anger and frustration to boil over and lead to violence. In summer 2019, a group of Eritrean youth went to UNHCR’s office and engaged in a fight with a group of Sudanese or South Sudanese youth. When they returned to Ard el Lewa, they got into fights with Egyptians in the street.³³ Some informants thought street robbing is more of an issue than gang conflict as it affects many more people.

Community Violence and Gangs

Multiple forms of violence originating within the Sudanese and South Sudanese communities or directed at them from Egyptians are connected to subsequent gang violence.³⁴ Below we discuss gender-based violence, Egyptian gangs, and domestic violence.

“Early Pregnancy” and Gender-Based Violence

Our informants described what they saw as a high rate of “early pregnancies” affecting South Sudanese and Nuba Sudanese girls, many of whom are 14–16 years old, including both girls in school and school dropouts. Not all the girls are gang involved: the pregnancies point to a larger issue of gender-based violence affecting young women and girls. Humanitarian organizations report an increase in reported incidents of gender-based violence in 2019, particularly among young Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali women and girls. Here we discuss how teen pregnancy relates to gang violence.

Pregnancies can create problems between families, divide the community, and potentially lead to violence, especially if the girl has gang-involved siblings. “If the girl’s brother or cousin is a member of a gang, he’ll go after the boy who got her pregnant. We do these things in our culture anyway,” but if the boy is gang-involved, “It’ll make the problem that much worse.”³⁵ A community activist admitted that

³² Interview with a pastor/school director, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

³³ Interviews with an Eritrean CBO director and an Eritrean refugee service provider case worker.

³⁴ These forms of violence are also discussed in “Getting by on the Margins: Sudanese and Somali Refugees in Cairo. A Case Report of Refugees in Towns” by Paul Miranda. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/egypt/getting-margins-sudanese-and-somali-refugees-case-report-refugees-towns-cairo-egypt>. Also see Miranda and Jacobsen, 2018.

³⁵ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

after his teenage sister was impregnated by a non-gang member, he armed himself and planned to seek retribution, but his friends intervened and cooled him down.³⁶ However, this kind of violence doesn't occur "all the time, just sometimes there are conflicts." When a girl gets pregnant, tribal elders or community leaders mediate and try to reach an agreement for the girl to marry the boy.³⁷ One pastor explained, "As long as the boy agrees to marry the girl, it's not a problem. Most of the time, the youth don't get involved, the elders settle everything." However, these are often girls, not women, and the extent to which *girls* are being married at a young age following pregnancy is unclear. Further research is needed to see whether community-driven child marriage could be occurring.³⁸



Hay el Ashr Market in Cairo. Photo by Paul Miranda 2020

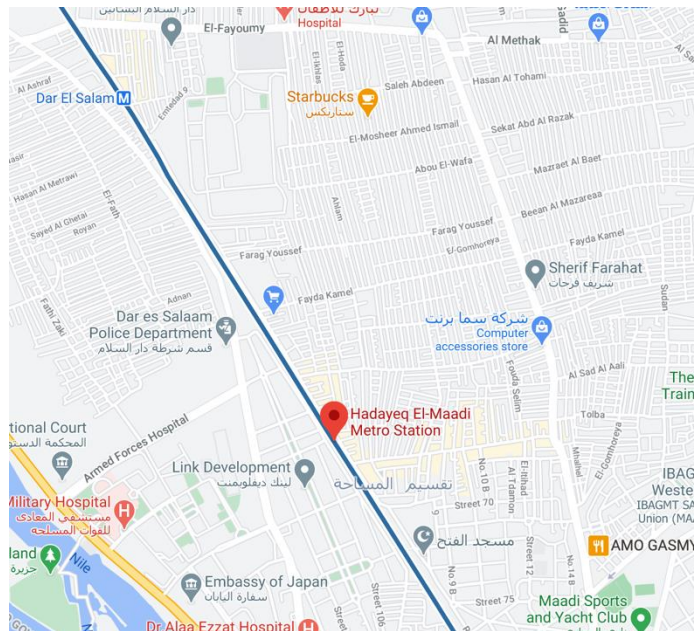
³⁶ Interview with a community activist, Abbassia.

³⁷ Interview with two tribal association chairpersons, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus. As Paul was interviewing them, two families were going through an informal mediation process overseen by the association in the adjacent room in their office. The girl was pregnant, but the boy was denying that he was the father. The girl was narrating the events of their relationships as part of the mediation process to show that the teenage boy was the father.

³⁸ Studies on masculinities in conflict-affected and (post)war contexts have traditionally focused on the behaviors of ex-combatants as opposed to the reproduction of masculinities in local institutions and by men and women in everyday social practice (Oosterom, 2017). Our research sheds light on how men reproduce and uphold violent and patriarchal forms of masculinity through everyday social practice. The role of women is less clear, but there are hints of how women and girls contribute. However, the patriarchal norms tribal elders and associations ("local institutions") are reproducing and upholding through community-driven child marriage are clear and certainly contribute to the overarching issue of violent forms of masculinity.

Egyptian Gangs

The presence of Egyptian gangs and relations between them and Sudanese and South Sudanese gangs is a complicating factor. Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Somali youth work for local Egyptian “thugs” (*baltagiya*/بلطجية), drug dealers, and gangs.³⁹ Refugee service providers say that cooperation between refugee youth gangs and Egyptian gangs is rising in certain neighborhoods, particularly in the drug trade.⁴⁰ For example, “If you walk around Hadayek el Maadi at 11 pm or later, you’ll see young Sudanese and South Sudanese kids standing on the street, if you don’t know, you’ll wonder what they’re doing, but they’re selling.”⁴¹ Whether the youth working in the local drug trade are Sudanese or South Sudanese gang affiliated or working for Egyptians is less clear. The relationships between refugee gangs and Egyptian gangs is also unclear, even to our informants. Some said that with increased links they’ve seen some girl members of refugee gangs having intimate relationships with young Egyptian men and some girls getting pregnant.



Hadayek el Maadi Neighborhood in Cairo. Image from Google Maps

Domestic Violence and Family Breakdown

Several of our informants spoke of domestic violence and “conflict in the home,” sometimes because “the women have opportunities, but the men don’t, so women have control of the money, which can lead to problems.”⁴² Domestic conflict can be a driver of gang involvement: “Whenever there is violence in the house, you’ll find at least one of the children has gone to the street to become a gang member.”⁴³ They thought it crucial to include intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention as part of a larger gang response. While we don’t have evidence about the prevalence of IPV, it could be high given the strong link between exposure to armed conflict and domestic violence and the long-running wars in the Nuba Mountains and South Sudan.⁴⁴

³⁹ For example, a Somali CBO leader in Ashr said, “The [Egyptian] drug dealers attract our children with chips and a can of Pepsi.” Drug dealers pay Somali male youth small amounts of money to deliver envelopes or packages. Interview with a Somali CBO leader, Hay el Ashr, summer 2018 (Miranda and Jacobsen, 2018).

⁴⁰ RIT workshop, Cairo. March 2019.

⁴¹ Interview with a community activist, Maadi.

⁴² Interview with a community activist, Maadi.

⁴³ Interview with a CBO director, Barajil.

⁴⁴ There is evidence that domestic violence and IPV increase after exposure to armed conflict, with the increase prolonged over extended periods of time even if hostilities cease (Ashford, 2008).

Our informants emphasized neglect of children, chronic under-stimulation in the home environment, and lack of nurturing relationships as issues affecting Nuba and South Sudanese children that are linked to youths' later engagement in violence and joining gangs. In large, single-headed South Sudanese and Nuba households, the mothers work long and physically draining hours as house cleaners, often in distant parts of the city. When they return home late at night, many have little interaction with their children as a result of exhaustion, stress, or psychosocial distress (often linked to lingering trauma from past exposure to violence). Our informants described a "breakdown" in families:

"Many come home from work late and exhausted. Not only do they not want to take care of their children, the stresses of their lives makes them dislike their children, some beat and insult them...The situation is bad in Egypt, so we need to care for our children, but we've been talking about this for a long time."⁴⁵

Some informants raised the issue of "non-present fathers," where fathers don't take an active role in their children's lives. Our Sudanese researcher was particularly frustrated by the fathers in his community who spend most of their time in cafes.

Most of our informants focused on the lack of strong familial relationships as connected to joining gangs. Teenagers go outside to get away from the family and start hanging out on the street. From there, they could slowly become involved with neighborhood groups.

The problem of parenting and caregiving is an issue that requires a sensitive and critical approach that accounts for the reasons the caregiving issues arise in the first place. In many contexts, blame is placed on individual parents, particularly "absent men," as a primary reason that neighborhood violence occurs. Caregiving is viewed as an individual issue that can be overcome with hard work. We recognize that caregiving is much more complicated and interacts with parents' experience of poverty, trauma, mental health, dominant masculine norms, lack of services and a social safety net, and other poverty and displacement-related factors—what is called "structural violence."⁴⁶

Exposure to Violence and Gang Violence

Our informants often drew links between the multiple types of violence youth experience or observe⁴⁷ throughout their lives and later engagement in violence. This linkage is strongly supported by research

⁴⁵ Interview with a community activist, Ain Shams.

⁴⁶ A note from the authors: As two white, western researchers, we are mindful that we are writing about parenting issues and caregiving among communities of color who are experiencing poverty and are displaced. While we are careful to report only what our informants talked about, we recognize that the phrase "absent men of color" has been used as a racist stereotype (in addition to others such as the "welfare queen" and the discourse of "respectability politics") to blame youth and problems of violence on men in marginalized communities in the United States and elsewhere. We cannot delve into this issue here, but we recognize that caregiving and parenting are much more complicated issues than simply blaming parents for lack of effort.

⁴⁷ Sudanese and South Sudanese have large families with children of varying ages, and some gang members still live at home. When youth return home with injuries from conflicts, including stabbings and beatings, their younger siblings are being exposed. In 2018, we interviewed schoolteachers and directors from four of the eight to ten Sudanese community schools in Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus. All of them said that ongoing neighborhood violence has visible and noticeable effects on children. However, of the four schools, only one school had one part-

on adverse childhood experiences (ACE), childhood trauma, and polyvictimization.⁴⁸ The original ACE research did not include community violence as a metric, but later studies found that community violence had larger effect sizes on children's outcomes than many of the other original ACE measures (Finkelhor et al., 2015), which has serious implications for Cairo's refugee youth. There are also strong links between ACE exposure and drug and alcohol abuse and overdose, mental illness, suicide, and a range of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.⁴⁹

Masculinity research suggests another negative feedback loop driving cycles of violence. Evidence shows that recurrent interpersonal, familial, and communal violence leads to the construction and reconstruction of patriarchal and violent masculinities, which then leads to more violence in a mutually reinforcing and codependent process (Heilman and Barker, 2018; Taylor et al., 2016). This body of evidence stresses the need to consider multiple pathways for prevention.

Masculinity, Gang Violence, and Joining a Gang

In the past decade, research has explored how masculine norms⁵⁰ are linked to young men joining gangs or armed groups, and why the use of violence is concentrated among young men globally. Empirical research bears out the strong link between patriarchal and rigid masculinities and engagement in sexual violence against women and intimate partners, and violence between men. The health and security of communities is profoundly affected by societal demands that boys and men must achieve and continually re-achieve their manhood. The status of "being a real man" is continually policed based on their performances of masculinities (Heilman and Barker, 2018). In addition to violence, masculine norms strongly influence a wide range of behaviors and outcomes, including sharing of household work, caregiving, alcohol and drug use, health-seeking behaviors, contraceptive use, HIV/STI infection and

time counselor (Miranda and Jacobsen, 2018). See for example: Abigail Hauslohner, "[Sudanese gangs take to Cairo streets](#)," Reuters, August 15, 2007.

⁴⁸ The vast body of research on ACEs, childhood and adolescent trauma, polyvictimization, and masculinity and violence consistently shows that repeated exposure to violence and ACEs in childhood and adolescence, particularly domestic violence, is strongly linked to adult engagement in violence (Hughes et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2016; Spano et al., 2010; Wolfe, 2018).

⁴⁹ Additionally, living in marginalized and under-resourced communities, experiencing housing or food insecurity (or other social determinants of health), or experiencing the historic and ongoing effects of poverty and racism contribute to and exacerbate the effects of ACEs (Jones et al., 2020).

⁵⁰ By masculine norms, we mean the messages, stereotypes, and social instructions relayed to young men on what it means to be a "real man," which is often connected to the belief that the only way to be a real man is to be strong, powerful, and respected; to dominate others; to fight with anyone who insults them to defend their honor; and to be womanizers. However, these broad notions take on their own localized meanings influenced by culture, religion, and language (Myrntinen et al., 2017).

prevention, and previous arrests.⁵¹ This evidence has led organizations to pioneer programs to transform violent and inequitable masculinities in multiple countries across the world (see Annex C).⁵²

Without using leading questions, we explored with our informants their views on what manhood means to young people and whether masculine norms influence violence between gang-involved young people or help explain why some young people join these groups. Their views were diverse. Some informants saw masculinity as a relatively minor factor compared to larger concerns such as needing protection or a source of income for youth. However, most of our informants, and especially former gang members, thought notions about manhood play a crucial role in the reproduction of violence and in youth joining groups. Even those who said manhood plays no role often indirectly supported this idea, but they did not use the language of masculine norms or gender.



Ain Shams Market in Cairo. Photo by Paul Miranda, 2020

What does *being a real man* mean to young Nuba Sudanese and South Sudanese men in Cairo? In our interviews, we explored masculinity in different ways. Our interviews (all conducted in Egyptian or Sudanese Arabic or English) always began with general questions around what types of gang violence occur, why, how, where, etc. Some informants directly alluded to masculinity, using the word.⁵³ In these cases, we asked them to explain what they meant with broad questions: why does it contribute, what is the connection, and what does manhood mean to young people. When our informant didn't use the word "masculinity" but expressed similar ideas, we introduced the word into the conversation and asked broad questions. For others who didn't immediately reference masculinity or similar ideas, we waited until we got to the masculinity section of the interview, then asked them to define what manhood means to young people in general, what it means to gang members,

⁵¹ See Al-Ali, 2018; Barker, 2005; Barker, 2016; Baird, 2012; Baird, 2018; Courtenay, 1998; Duriesmith, 2014; Instituto Promundo, 2002; Jensen, 2008; Taylor et al., 2016; and UN Women, 2013.

⁵² For example, see <https://promundoglobal.org/#> Program H and M in particular; <http://menengage.org/>; <https://genderjustice.org.za/>; <http://raisingvoices.org/sasa/>; <https://www.abaadmena.org/>.

⁵³ The Arabic word for masculinity or manhood is *rojolah*/رجولة. When discussing masculinity, we used *rojolah* and a phrase that translates to "societal norms related to manhood." *Rjolah* translates quite similarly to masculinity and manhood in English. The same root is used in a different form to say "man up," and insults are used along the lines of "What, aren't you a man?" with the same root to provoke someone during an argument or fight.

and what makes someone a man.⁵⁴ For the few who did not engage in discussions on masculinity with substance, we directly asked if they saw any connection between masculine norms and the use of violence.

Our informants voiced some universal themes about norms of masculinity: having and projecting power, showing dominance over others, being strong and tough, not going back on your word, enjoying respect and reputation, and defending honor. Many noted that young men feel the need to continually “show” or “prove” their manhood, particularly if it is challenged or called into question by slights or insults: “The youth, they’re all trying to prove they’re more powerful than each other, trying to show off against each other.”⁵⁵ And, “You have to use your power to prove your manhood...if you try to escape from a problem or try to solve it wisely, people will be suspicious of your manhood.”⁵⁶ A community activist explained, “If someone challenges you, proves he’s a man to you, you have to show you’re a man back to him, showing cowardice is the worst thing for us.”⁵⁷ When a boy reaches 15 years old, “He wants to be strong, show that he can talk and do whatever he wants, like ‘I’m big now and no one can control me.’”⁵⁸ The former gang members, who were younger than the pastors and community leaders we interviewed, agreed. For young men, “Manhood means I’ve grown up and no one should disobey or disrespect me, if I’ve said or decided something, I shouldn’t undo it.”⁵⁹ And, “We have an ego issue, pride and honor, we get angry from these things and have to defend ourselves, we’re from that kind of patriarchal society.”⁶⁰

For those involved in gang life, the requirements of *being a real man* take on more significance and are policed by those around them. Youth are required to continually prove and re-achieve their manhood whenever it is threatened. A former gang member said, “To these kids, manhood means being a gangster.”⁶¹ Another said about gang members:

“[He feels] he should be feared by everyone else, it means domination. He should have power and authority which makes his word stronger than everyone else’s...he should be physically fit and never undo his word.”

“If a gang member doesn’t commit a revenge attack, his friends will say he’s a ‘coward, not a man,’ and they’ll call him *nyao*.⁶² If he doesn’t retaliate for something, he’ll feel shame and not

⁵⁴ Since revenge attacks were almost always discussed in the first section on violence, we also asked what gang members would say about someone if they didn’t commit a revenge attack or what their girlfriends would say.

⁵⁵ Interview with a pastor, Maadi.

⁵⁶ Interview with a tribal association chairperson, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

⁵⁷ Interview with a community activist, Ain Shams.

⁵⁸ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams.

⁵⁹ Interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

⁶⁰ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

⁶¹ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams. He added, “But I’ve done my research on what it means to be a man and violence isn’t necessary for manhood.”

⁶² *Nyao* is how Sudanese and South Sudanese verbalize the sound of a cat in Arabic. For Sudanese and South Sudanese youth, it is used to describe someone whose manliness is in doubt. It has the same connotation as “pussy” in English.

be able to walk with his head lifted high among his friends...if you call a gang member *nyao*, he'll hurt you because they never want to want to hear this word."⁶³

Performing violence is connected to staking a claim to manhood: "The way you're violent, this shows power...back in the day, when you joined, they gave you a machete and told you to use it against someone. This was a test to show your manhood."⁶⁴ And, "Those who don't use violence, they're call[ed] 'home boys,' they're looked down on by others, they're always humiliated."⁶⁵ There is a clear connection between these masculinities as drivers of gang violence. The need to project "power," "to dominate," "to show others I'm powerful and you're nothing," "to be the king of [their area]," and the need to respond to perceived provocations were the most commonly described reasons for outbursts of violence. Many of our informants stressed this connection on their own without our prompting.

Former gang members also noted how gang culture and associated norms have changed over time. For some, gang life, in early years, was about being "cool and fancy," and going to "nice places, organizing parties, and drinking fancy alcohol;" they wouldn't attack people who weren't part of gang life.⁶⁶ But over time, violence became much more embedded in gang life. In an earlier study, Natalie Forcier observed similar trends. By late 2008, teenagers who had previously been advised to "take care for their future" by gang members, became involved with gangs "with an ever-greater propensity to use violence and more masculine ideals to prove" (Forcier, 2009).

Masculinity and Joining a Gang

Masculine norms are a factor in why young men join gangs or regard gang members as local heroes. A common view of our informants was that as boys and young men began to experience the ill effects of gangs—robbery in the streets, emasculating insults or threats, or physical attacks (targeted or mistaken)—they felt ashamed and powerless. To regain their sense of manliness and strength, they joined a group:

"The gang guys steal your mobile, so your father buys you a new one. But then the next day, they steal it again and so you start to say to yourself, 'I'm a man, I can't let them do this to me anymore' and you'll start to get involved with groups."⁶⁷

"The teenagers, they have a mentality, if they get beaten, they'll want to join a group. If the gangs beat an older person, he'll just ignore them. But a teenager, if he's beaten he'll want revenge, he can't ignore what happened. [If their phone is taken] it's already gone, it's not the specific thing that he wants back, he won't say I joined to get my phone back, he wants to be strong, they see that joining makes you a strong man."⁶⁸

⁶³ Interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

⁶⁴ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

⁶⁵ Interview with a CBO director and a pastor, Ain Shams.

⁶⁶ Interviews with former gang members, Abbassia and Maadi.

⁶⁷ Interview with a pastor, Ezbet el Nakhl.

⁶⁸ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams.

Two Sudanese mothers with teenage boys explained how gang members use emasculating insults to engage youth. When teenage boys pass gang members on the street, members tell the boys that they should hang out with them. If the boys ignore them or refuse, members often say things like, “You’re a pussy (*nyao*)” or “You’re scared and not a man.” Some youth will then start to hang out on the street to “prove they’re men.” The women referred to this provocation as gangs “exploiting” Sudanese culture to recruit youth.⁶⁹ A former gang member said masculinity “is the thing they use to drive members’ commitments. If you’ve been robbed, they’ll come to you and say that you need to prove yourself.”⁷⁰

Gang members with their conspicuous displays of power, money, and girlfriends become local heroes and role models that some youth aspire to. Another former gang member explained,

“Life put the youth here in a difficult situation and they see a gang member taking control of the neighborhood, he’s strong, so they think I want to be like him, I want to dress and act as he does...The kids who go to school regularly, they get beaten in the street and seem weak.”

Some youth are afraid of gangs and join them for protection. But for the “the juniors” who aren’t afraid, they join because of the power the gang members enjoy or because “most of the girls love them.” Our informants repeatedly referenced status symbols such as clothes, girlfriends, and being physically fit as why some youth look up to gang members. Youth suffering from neglect or conflict at home tended to look up to gang members. For example:

“The children who have no one to talk to and give them advice about life as they grow up, they learn from what they see on the street. They see the gang members in fancy clothes, with expensive phones, having fit bodies, they see them as cool and strong people and feel that they have to be like them.”⁷¹

“They can ‘pretend to be like them and like to walk in their path to become like them.’”⁷²

Research points to the sense of identity, belonging, and friendship that youth find in gangs that they weren’t able to find elsewhere. When community cohesion, and family, religious, and social institutions, and schools become stressed and break down, gang involvement tends to become highest (Barker, 2005). But research also shows that close relationships with caregivers in teenage years is often the crucial difference between youth who join violent groups and those who don’t (Barker, 2005; Baird, 2012). These points were often made during RIT’s workshop in Cairo; however, conversations about identity and friendship did not often come up in our interviews.⁷³ A former gang member pointed out that many gang members feel closer to their fellow members and talk to them more frequently than to their actual families: “No one will protect you other than your **brother** who is with you in this group, no one from your home will protect you in case there’s a problem.”⁷⁴ This statement reflects previous findings that highlight the extent to which gangs provide members support—money for rent or medical

⁶⁹ Interview with two Nuba Sudanese mothers, Ain Shams, summer 2018 (Miranda and Jacobsen, 2018).

⁷⁰ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

⁷¹ Interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

⁷² Interview with a former gang member, Zeitoun.

⁷³ Our interviews covered a wide variety of topics, and some issues were not fully covered.

⁷⁴ Interview with a former gang member, Maadi. The emphasis was his own.

treatment and summer trips to Alexandria or the North Coast—and a feeling of collective action and solidarity that bonds members of the group to each other (Lewis, 2011).

Sudanese Civil Wars and “Teaching” Masculine Norms to Youth

Decades of war, conflict, and militarization in the Nuba Mountains and South Sudan have produced and reproduced constructions of hypermasculinity and patriarchal norms that are connected to violence against women and men (Hutchinson, 2000). During the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983 to 2005), the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) commanders used gifts of bride wealth and wives to generate loyalty and consolidate power (Pinaud, 2014). More recently, SPLA commanders in South Sudan have given soldiers and allied militias license to loot, pillage, and rape. Sexual slavery and abduction are accepted as compensation for those participating in the current conflict (United Nations, 2019). These practices and constructions of masculinity fuel gang violence in Cairo, as noted by our informants who referred to society “teaching” or imparting these ideas to youth:

“We have to acknowledge how the violence we grew up in affects the youth...the war becomes part of you.”⁷⁵

“[In South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains], if someone doesn’t have a gun, he’s not a man.”⁷⁶

“The youth are blindly putting these [norms] into practice in the form of gang activity... ‘We as a society, we teach these things about manhood to young people;’ ‘Mothers contribute’ because from their boys’ early years, ‘they tell them you have to be a man, if anyone takes your pen at school, you have to fight him and be cruel;’ braveness for our people is to be cruel to your enemy.”⁷⁷

Others noted that Egyptian patriarchal norms further influence constructions of masculinity as men in Egypt “have to be loud;” “take their right,” and be “*ged’a/عجده*.”⁷⁸

Needing Protection or Income versus Seeking Power and Respect

Other reasons besides manhood play a role in violence and youth joining gangs. Some informants cite financial reasons: “They rob people because of financial problems, they think it’s an easy way for them to have money.”⁷⁹ Others emphasized the need for protection—in some areas gang members attack youth unless they pay a monthly protection fee or join the group,⁸⁰ and some youth who are “afraid of

⁷⁵ Interview with a pastor, Ezbet el Nakhl.

⁷⁶ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams and Zeitoun. Our Nuba Sudanese field researcher agreed but pointed out that owning weapons isn’t necessarily equated with joining an armed group; it’s an expectation for people living in small villages in the Nuba Mountains.

⁷⁷ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams and Zeitoun.

⁷⁸ *Ged’a/عجده* does not easily translate. Essentially, it refers to a man who will always be there for his friends, defends them without question at a moment’s notice, be honorable and respected, and protect his sisters, wife, and female relatives.

⁷⁹ Interview with a former gang member, Zeitoun.

⁸⁰ Interview with two tribal association chairpersons, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus. We did not hear of this in any other neighborhood.

gang members prefer to work under their shadow for protection.”⁸¹ Seeking protection or a source of income and achieving and defending manliness can all co-exist. In Medellin, Colombia, youth cited self-defense or protection as their reasons for joining gangs, but also said joining gave them respect, access to women, and nice clothes: the gang was a pathway to manhood (Baird, 2012). For young people, the reasons for joining depend on their circumstances and risk factors. Protection or income are important, but so too is the need to achieve and defend one’s manhood. This complex connection means masculinity issues as well as livelihoods must be included in prevention work, not an easy task in Cairo.⁸²

The Cure Violence Model for Violence Reduction

Across the world, organizations have pioneered programs to transform violent and inequitable masculinities (see Annex C).⁸³ In the United States “public health” approaches and “street outreach” programs have sought to reduce and interrupt violence but have not explicitly targeted masculinity issues when talking about changing cultural norms.⁸⁴ The Cure Violence (CV) model is one such approach, and in this section we discuss how it might be usefully adapted to Cairo.

The CV model takes a “public health approach” to preventing violence. Proponents argue that violence clusters and spreads like epidemic diseases and “transmits” (i.e., causes more of itself) like the spread of infection—those exposed to violence are more likely to engage in it. They argue that violence is contagious because social norms create expectations at the group level. Violence becomes the “expected response to conflict, disputes, or perceived slights.”⁸⁵ Not everyone exposed to violence engages in it, just as not everyone exposed to a cold contracts the disease. Protective and risk factors influence the “violence contagion.” The dosage, i.e., the amount or intensity of exposure, is related to later engagement. As Gary Sultkin, the founder of CV argues, “even if one does not fully accept that

⁸¹ Interview with a former gang member, Zeitoun; pastor, Ain Shams; pastor, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

⁸² PSTIC and the church pastors used to work with Don Bosco (an international NGO) to provide gang-affiliated youth vocational training in electrical work, auto repair, and plumbing. The training is of good quality, but the complicating factor is whether participants can turn these skills into a consistent source of income (interview with a program manager, refugee service provider). Save the Children’s previous refugee livelihood work focused on wage employment. It tried to develop a pool of potential employers and match refugees based on skills in sewing, cooking, mechanical work, or unskilled labor. However, there was a high dropout rate and Save stopped working with factories in 10th of Ramadan and el-Aboor as many said the jobs were too far away. Others refused jobs that were closer to their neighborhoods. Currently, they’re exploring providing development grants to small and informal Egyptian business in refugee neighborhoods and matching refugees to employment opportunities.

⁸³ For example, see <https://promundoglobal.org/#> Program H and M in particular; <http://menengage.org/>; <https://genderjustice.org.za/>; <http://raisingvoices.org/sasa/>; <https://www.abaadmena.org/>.

⁸⁴ Nor do masculinity programs reference CV or broader street outreach approaches.

⁸⁵ Social codes emphasize quick and violent retribution for transgressions against one’s sense of self or insults to reputation. Failure to respond is perceived as a sign of weakness (Ransford and Slutkin, 2017).

violence is a contagious disease, its contagious nature can still be easily recognized” (Ransford and Slutkin, 2017).

Based on understanding violence as a contagious disease, the CV model uses three strategies to reduce and prevent the transmission of violence:

1. *Detect and interrupt transmission by anticipating violence and intervening before it erupts.*
2. *Identify the highest transmitters of violence and change their behavior.*
3. *Change community norms by discouraging the use of violence.*

The model also emphasizes the importance of data collection and monitoring to identify changes in violence patterns and levels. A summary of Cure Violence program evaluations is in Annex A.

Detect and interrupt violence

This component relies on trusted neighborhood insiders, referred to as violence interrupters (VIs), who interrupt potentially violent conflicts, mediate and intervene in ongoing conflicts, and keep conflicts “cool.” They canvas and maintain a presence in violence-prone hotspots in their neighborhoods, talk and interact with residents and youth to understand what disputes or conflicts are brewing, and keep up with rumors about potential violence.⁸⁶ They identify situations that are likely to result in violence, such as territory disputes, the formation of a new neighborhood crew, perceived slights or insults, small personal disputes, and signs of disrespect, then intervene and mediate before the situation escalates. If violence occurs, they intervene to prevent retaliation and revenge attacks. If a shooting occurs, VIs go to the hospital and speak with the family and friends of the victim to cool down emotions and prevent retaliation. They continually canvas their neighborhoods in order to keep conflicts “cool.”

Cure Violence has specific methodology for mediating conflicts, but the VIs must be seen as credible messengers and be respected by the young people in the community or the program won’t work. VIs cannot be perceived as outsiders or police informants and must be carefully recruited. They are often chosen based on their own experiences with violence, which allows them to establish relationships with young men at high risk of engaging in violence. Their insider knowledge



⁸⁶ For example, in New York’s South Bronx program, VIs spent 82 working hours per month on average canvassing their neighborhoods. Eighty percent of surveyed men between the ages 18–30 in the program area recognized one VI, and 66% recognized all of them. The surveyed men also reported about 4.5 contacts per month with program staff (Delgado et al., 2017).

means they have deep social connections in the area. Many are former gang members and come from the same communities where they work (Butts et al., 2015).⁸⁷

Identify the highest transmitters

The second component of the CV model relies on outreach workers (OWs) to identify and “treat” those at the highest risk of engaging in violence. The idea is to target those who are likely to cause the spread, i.e., at the highest risk of engaging in violence, through “active case finding.” Just as disease control specialists seek out those suspected of Ebola (or COVID-19), CV outreach workers target those likely to engage in violence. Like the VIs, OWs must be trusted insiders from the community. They rely on locally designed criteria to determine where and how to focus their relationship-building efforts, then use those relationships to steer individuals towards positive opportunities and resources in the community. The goal is to encourage individuals to think differently about violence and to change their behavior. Social service partnerships⁸⁸ are critical for their success; otherwise, the outreach workers will not be able to offer any real alternatives.

Change community norms

The final component aims to mobilize the community to change social norms that support the use of violence and thereby strengthen community resistance to violence. CV organizations partner with other local agencies and leaders to hold events in public spaces. They invite the entire community to events such as barbecues, concerts, and block parties and distribute messaging materials (buttons, wrist bands, stickers, t-shirts, and fliers) that oppose the use of violence in order to break the normalization of violence in a community. If an act of violence occurs, an event is held to condemn the violence, often in the form of a prayer vigil or rally. However, the messaging is careful to condemn the violence, not the individual. When a community reaches an accomplishment, such as a period of time without a single act of violence, interrupters and outreach workers knock on doors to inform residents to provide further encouragement that violence can be stopped.

Applying the Cure Violence Model in Cairo

Can the CV model work in Cairo? The interpersonal disputes that fuel gang-related violence in Cairo and the way violence spreads through the revenge cycle closely match the type of violence CV is designed to

⁸⁷ In the South Bronx program, all the VIs were aged 27–49 and grew up in the program neighborhood. More than half still live there. Most were formerly incarcerated, and half were previously members of gangs or street crews (Delgado et al., 2017). In the Trinidad and Tobago program, the VIs were individuals who were already engaging in violence prevention in their communities. Some were former gang members, but not all. They all had the credibility to engage with gangs and move between gang territories without fear of reprisal (Maguire et al., 2018).

⁸⁸ Outreach workers provided individuals services to effect change: education or job referrals, mental health, alcohol, or drug treatment, help with reintegrating into communities or families, and any number of other services.

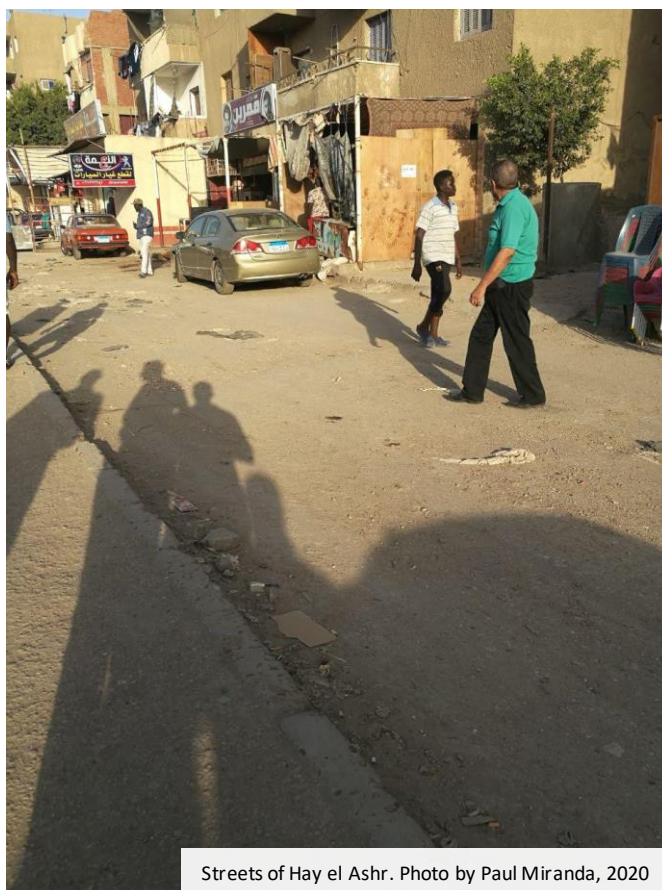
address and suggest good potential for the model. We explored this question with our informants after we explained how the CV model works. This section addresses the potential for the program in Cairo’s refugee neighborhoods based on their views.

It is important to note that Sudanese and South Sudanese communities already engage in violence prevention efforts at a grassroots level. Their efforts are informal and somewhat fragmented, but are entirely community driven and outside the humanitarian system. We return to the potential for this work in Cairo below.

Violence Interruption

The first CV component—interrupting, mediating, and keeping conflicts cool—depends on trusted insiders being able to learn about brewing disputes and intervening before violence erupts. Most of our informants believed this would be possible, based on their own experience in detecting and interrupting violence in their communities, their understanding of the respect certain individuals enjoy with gang-affiliated young people, and the informal and piecemeal violence prevention efforts that already exist. Only two informants explicitly rejected the idea of violence interruption. There were some differences about who would be best suited to act as violence interrupters (VIs) and outreach workers (OWs), but, overall, it was agreed that former gang members, certain kinds of pastors, community leaders, school teachers/directors, and “gang-adjacent”⁸⁹ individuals would be best suited to work in a CV program.

Successful violence interruptions by our informants include “first events” and attempts to stop a cycle of violence as it was underway. However, the distinction is not necessarily clear given long histories of violence and lingering resentment. For example, a CBO leader in Barajil explained that a group of gang-affiliated youth organized a picnic in Alexandria to lure some of their rivals to a secluded location in order to attack them. Younger members of the group informed the CBO leader of the plan, and she intervened. She organized a picnic on the same day and invited both groups along with their families without revealing that she knew



Streets of Hay el Ashr. Photo by Paul Miranda, 2020

⁸⁹ To note, informants did not refer to people this way. We use this term to refer to people who are not active members of groups and do not engage in violence but have strong connections to and spend time with gang members. Interviewees referenced musicians and rappers, individuals who grew up with gang members in their neighborhoods but never formally joined, barbers, and well-known footballers or artists.

about their original plan. With her and her colleagues from the CBO present, along with the families, no one was going to commit any violence. They then used the opportunity to settle the dispute between the groups and spent the picnic playing football together “in peace and harmony.” As she noted, “This is just an example to show you that the violence interruption from Cure Violence is possible.”⁹⁰ Similarly, a pastor who works in Ain Shams and the Central North Cairo areas told how when he was involved in gang work in earlier years, he had the phone numbers of gang members and leaders and had good relationships with them. Sometimes members would inform him of a plan to attack a rival group. The pastor would then call the targeted group and warn them to stay off the street that day: “When they didn’t find anyone, they would return to their neighborhood without committing any violence.” He noted that this method often produced good results.

Cure Violence methods for intervening include creating cognitive dissonance, derailing, changing the thinking, changing the decision, providing information, buying time, and negotiating compromise (Delgado et al., 2017).⁹¹ A teacher and former PSTIC caseworker in Hay el Ashr responded to a potentially violent situation in a similar way:

A fellow teacher scolded a gang-affiliated student for sleeping in class, and the student saw this as an insult to his honor and summoned his fellow gang members who burst into the school brandishing knives and machetes and threatening to harm the teacher. The former caseworker, who had relationships with these young men based on his work with PSTIC, intervened. He emphasized to them that he understood that they need to be respected and that respect was important to them, but he explained how hurting the teacher would only lead to further consequences for them and those in the school. He then brokered an apology between the teacher and the gang members after they agreed to hand over their weapons before they sat down with the teacher.⁹²

The teacher’s approach closely matches how VIs in CV programs go about their work.

Our informants who viewed the CV model favorably thought that ex-gang members would be able to uncover potential violence and intervene successfully and safely. For example, one pastor said:

“One guy, the gang guys all like him, he’s like a boss to them. He used to be with them, but now he’s engaged and getting married soon, but they still like him. When they have problems, they come to him for advice about what to do.”⁹³

This pastor said people like this former gang member could successfully work as VIs because gang members would listen to them out of respect. Former gang members would know “who is upset with who and who is in a dispute with who.” Another pastor said that sometimes if disputes are about to

⁹⁰ The leader noted that she’s worked to gain the trust of some of gang members in her area and now they inform her of any disputes or issues that arise between them, which allows her to respond and intervene right away.

⁹¹ As one VI in New York explained, “You have to give someone an opportunity not to look like a punk in a group of people.” See <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/19/nyregion/six-blocks-96-buildings-zero-shootings-new-recipe-at-the-queensbridge-houses.html>.

⁹² Interview with a schoolteacher, Araba wa Nus and Hay el Ashr.

⁹³ Interview with a pastor, Maadi.

escalate into violence, some “wise gang members” from each group communicate with each other to resolve the dispute before it escalates.⁹⁴ Some former gang members already take on interrupter roles when conflicts get violent, albeit on a piecemeal basis. In Ain Shams, when the violence gets bad, “they’ll write on Facebook, ‘Guys we have to stop, we’re destroying ourselves’” and start reaching out to the parties to settle their disputes. Often they invite the church, community leaders, or well-liked teachers and school directors to aid in the process after they get it started.⁹⁵ As another former gang member explained, “When I was in those groups, the gang members saw me as a role model and I’m still known, so this keeps my relations to them good as far as I know. If I see them having conflicts, it’s easy for me to interrupt and resolve the issue.”⁹⁶

There is a long history in Cairo of Sudanese and South Sudanese pastors trying to intervene when conflicts get particularly “hot” and undertaking reconciliation efforts that conclude with truces.⁹⁷ As one pastor explained, “We’ve gathered the gangs before to do peace agreements.” But after the truce is agreed upon, “We stop working” and eventually it falls apart.⁹⁸ One former gang member pointed out that while the groups or neighborhood sub-groups make truces from time to time, eventually some kind of disagreement or fight happens, and the truce falls apart. She noted that there is a lot of mistrust and poor communication between the individuals involved in these groups and they will quickly resort to violence to resolve their disputes. So tensions rise, and they stop talking to each other. At this point, an agreement is at risk of falling apart.⁹⁹ Or, with the passage of time, the truces start to lose their significance and “People forget” without anyone continuing to check up on them.¹⁰⁰ Some of our informants were impressed by the CV model’s focus on keeping conflicts cool. As a pastor explained, “We need to keep following up with the situation to see how it’s going.” But pastors, school directors, and community leaders don’t have the time and resources to keep following up. A pastor and school director in Ain Shams noted this lack of time and resources and added, “We need these interrupters to keep talking to them.”

Some of our informants saw the CV model as a way to formalize the fragmented violence prevention work already being undertaken by pastors, community leaders, and ex-gang members. Training, support, and better organization could make a difference in their communities. These “proto-VIs” are willing and ready to take on this kind of work because they believe in its efficacy. As a former gang member said, “I wouldn’t hesitate to become a violence interrupter.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams.

⁹⁵ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams; interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

⁹⁶ Interview with a former gang member, Zeitoun.

⁹⁷ For example, in 2013, Pastor Daniel Akech and Pastor Marko Tartisio led a mass reconciliation effort that began by addressing internal neighborhood disputes and eventually brought together all the different neighborhood groups. They were supported by All Saints’ Cathedral and the South Sudanese embassy. They were joined by Sultan Noon of the South Sudanese Tribal Chiefs Union and other tribal leaders in their efforts.

⁹⁸ Interview with a pastor/school director, Ain Shams.

⁹⁹ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with a former gang member, Maadi.

¹⁰¹ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

Targeting the Most At-Risk of Committing Violence

The second component of the Cure Violence model focuses on identifying those at the highest risk for engaging in violence and working to change their behavior with outreach workers (OWs). In Cairo, potential OWs would have to make breakthroughs without endangering themselves or others. Our informants said many have advocated for this approach before. At least three had previous success in informal outreach work where they built relationships with young people and slowly steered them towards different opportunities.¹⁰² One pastor in Maadi identified a group of four young men engaging in violence and street robbery. He built relationships with them and discussed with them the effects of their actions in the community. “If you show them the negative effects of what they’re doing or what’s happening, some of them will change.” Through repeated efforts, the pastor broke through with three of them who admitted that they weren’t robbing out of need, but to prove their strength to other gang members, “to show that they’re capable of it.” The three exited gang life. The fourth claimed to be robbing out of need, so after the pastor worked with him to help him find “lawful” ways of earning income, he too left behind gang life.¹⁰³

Continued efforts over an extended period of time based on respect and understanding was a common theme, which matches the CV model philosophy.¹⁰⁴ Our informants described some of their own success in helping young people exit gang life, but they viewed outreach as necessary and crucial. They noted that gang members are often demonized by the Sudanese and South Sudanese communities, which leads to more violence. Engaging with them on a positive basis, with influential people they respect such as former gang members, could lead to real change. However, the links between Egyptian and Sudanese and South Sudanese gangs will be important to keep in mind. If an OW is targeting an individual who has links to local Egyptian gangs and works in the drug trade, that individual will require specialized assistance to exit gang life.

The CV outreach work targets those at highest risk for committing violence in order to lower the daily “transmission” of violence. CV programs use assessment criteria to determine who is “high risk,” which requires deep knowledge of neighborhoods and individuals’ reputations and histories of violence. Our informants noted that this knowledge already exists in their communities:

“Of course people know who does what, we all live among each other. Those who commit the violence are known people, they live among us. If I heard about something, I probably know who did it.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² In addition, many of our informants noted Pastor Daniel Akech’s successes over the years pulling young men and women out of gang life. As a former gang member himself, he is able to forge strong connections with young people. One former gang member referred to him as the pastor of the youth.

¹⁰³ Interview with a pastor, Maadi.

¹⁰⁴ For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, one former gang member said of her OW, “I don’t want to say it’s harassment, but she come looking for me all the time. If she don’t see me, she leave a message” (Maguire et al., 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Interview with a community activist, Abbassia.

In Ain Shams, the South Sudanese know the gang members because they all come from local families : “They’re not outsiders to the neighborhood, they’re known people.”¹⁰⁶ The 2013 reconciliation effort included leaders of neighborhood groups, but also targeted the “toughest gang members,” who were “always creating problems and conflict.”¹⁰⁷

Outreach work can be complicated by the protection concerns gang members may face when they leave their groups. Some former gang members said “quitting is allowed” if you want to become a good person and stay away from the violence, but on condition you don’t move out of the neighborhood. If you do, your former gang will assume you’ve joined a different group and will seek retribution.¹⁰⁸ As one noted, “It’s logical because if you move to a different area, the groups there won’t let you live in peace unless you join them.”¹⁰⁹

“If you had many conflicts with other groups, it’s hard to leave because that anger still exists in others. If other groups know that you left your group, they may attack you because they know you’ll be without protection. Your own group will let you leave, but they’ll warn you that it’ll be easy for others to target you, which may end up pushing you back into the group.”¹¹⁰

A gang leader who quit his gang started a new life and opened a business in Barajil. But his former members didn’t leave him alone: “They attacked him several times and injured him until we intervened and convinced them to leave him alone.”¹¹¹ Some noted that in earlier years it was much harder to leave gang life; it required spending time away or hiding. One informant spent years away from Cairo so that when he returned, people were no longer “interested” in him. The barriers facing individuals trying to exit gang life depend on an individual’s relationships with their group and their history of violence.

Some community leaders and pastors thought outreach efforts should focus on gang leaders rather than “high-risk” individuals. They thought that if gang leaders abandoned their violent ways, their members would follow. However, our research suggests some flaws in this belief. Gangs and neighborhood crews do not operate with strict discipline among members. Violence often emerges from interpersonal disputes unrelated to a leader. Even if a leader tells his group not to engage in violence, the need to defend one’s honor or respond to perceived slights might supersede his orders. Some groups and especially sub-groups don’t have leaders. One former gang member said, “The system of gang leadership isn’t working anymore.” Groups that don’t have leaders carry out their activities if everyone agrees. However, gang practices differ over place and time.¹¹²

Changing Social Norms

The third component of the CV model focuses on influencing social norms to discourage the use of violence through public education and community mobilization. Our informants noted that the “public”

¹⁰⁶ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with a former gang member, Maadi.

¹⁰⁸ Interviews with former gang members, Abbassia, Zeitoun, and Maadi.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

¹¹⁰ Interview with a former gang member, Zeitoun.

¹¹¹ Interview with a CBO director, Barajil.

¹¹² Interview with a former gang member, Abbassia.

nature of this component carried a lot of risk in Cairo that would need mitigation strategies, but they viewed the mobilization component positively, as a way to break the normalization of violence. For example, “Carrying out violence has become totally accepted by our society in Cairo, it’s something normal, just another part of life.”¹¹³ And, “No one is happy with the situation, we’ve lost a lot of people,” but “it’s somehow normal now for these things to happen.”¹¹⁴ Some thought celebrating non-violence could encourage people to make others less likely to engage in violence, or “make the community part of the solution” as opposed to what they viewed as the tendency of NGOs to just “do things” to the community.

Potential Risks to Programming and Staying Safe

In meetings with UN agencies, UNHCR protection staff in particular, we heard how difficult it is to work on gang violence despite the devastating effects it has on communities. During the RIT workshop in March 2019, participants questioned how gang prevention or violence reduction work could be done safely without endangering program staff or antagonizing the gangs against the humanitarian system, and many participants expressed doubts that anything impactful could be done. We heard that in certain inter-agency settings, a few senior staff from humanitarian organizations had expressed the view that Egyptian police should intervene, arrest members of these groups, and deport those who committed crimes (many of these individuals are registered refugees under the protection of UNHCR).¹¹⁵ Rather than advocating for methods that have failed in other parts of the world,¹¹⁶ we should look to refugee communities themselves. The smallest dive into Sudanese and South Sudanese communities quickly shows their many efforts to reduce and prevent violence.

It is important to recognize that in neighborhoods across Cairo, pastors and church leaders, tribal association and CBO leaders, former gang members, and community activists are already actively engaging in violence interruption, albeit informally and piecemeal, safely and without inflaming tensions. Their work is not without some risk, but it is ongoing. Of our 31 informants, 22 said that they are able to safely interact with gangs. Only three rejected the possibility of staying safe or minimizing risk while doing gang and violence prevention work, two of whom rejected the potential of the CV model. The ability to stay safe is linked to the ability to learn of potential violence and brewing disputes. It depends on respect, trust, social connections, and a careful approach. Most importantly, working with gang-involved young people depends on not condemning them as individuals:

¹¹³ Interview with a community activist, Abbassia.

¹¹⁴ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams. She noted that many of her friends she initially joined the gang with were killed over the years, which is one of the reasons she eventually decided to leave the life behind.

¹¹⁵ Personal communication with a senior member of a humanitarian organization in Cairo.

¹¹⁶ The suggestion of major police intervention in refugee neighborhoods is similar to the “iron-fist” approaches to counteract gangs that have been attempted in the United States and Latin America. Studies regularly show that “tough on crime” approaches fail, and often these repressive tactics exacerbate violence and devastate local communities (Jütersonke et al., 2009). They can also lead to high rates of incarceration, which leads to further destructive knock-on effects for communities (Alexander, 2010).

“If you treat them badly, it will cause harm to you and those working on these issues. But I enjoy respect from the gang members because I’ve sat with them many times and show that I care about them. If we keep the interaction with them like this, the program won’t face any risks.”¹¹⁷

This sentiment was a common one expressed by all our informants who have long histories of working with gang members. A pastor in Ain Shams explained, “If we approach them and treat them in a friendly way, we can deal with them. We used to talk to them as if not they’re not gang members and it helped us reach them.”¹¹⁸ As a former gang member explained,

“If they feel you really want to help them or care about them, they’ll listen to you. You have to build good trust with them or it [CV] won’t work. The way you approach gang members is key for risk, they’re very distrustful people and they think you may have an alternative agenda than what you actually say.”¹¹⁹

Those who interact frequently with gang members do so safely because of their social connections to them. For example, a community activist in Maadi was a teacher in earlier years, and many of the gang members in Maadi were her students when they were children. They still see her as their teacher, which allows her to easily interact with them.¹²⁰ Similarly, a former gang member in Ain Shams is a popular rapper who makes music that many of the groups and sub-groups enjoy. Due to his popularity, he is able to cross between and talk to different sub-groups in Ain Shams without a problem.¹²¹

The important role of the church¹²² in minimizing risk was often emphasized. Many informants noted that because gang members feel respected by the church, pastors have a unique ability to engage with gangs without endangering themselves or others. A pastor who has worked with gang-involved youth for over 10 years said that he has never been attacked or felt endangered by his work. Since “I’m a spiritual father to them, no one can do anything to me.”¹²³ Another pastor in Ain Shams said all the local gang members know him well and respect him, and that gang members generally trust pastors because their “mothers pray in our churches and we help them.” However, our interviews with former gang members showed that while pastors can approach gang members safely, they’re not all respected:

“The gang members will listen to a pastor when he comes to talk to them, and they’ll leave him alone, but they’re mostly annoyed by the pastors who just preach to them. There are some

¹¹⁷ Interview with a school director, Maadi.

¹¹⁸ Interview with a pastor and a CBO director, Ain Shams. Another pastor noted that he doesn’t even refer to them as “gangs” as the members typically don’t like this word. Instead, he just calls them “groups.”

¹¹⁹ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

¹²⁰ Interview with a community activist, Maadi.

¹²¹ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams. The rapper uses his popularity to help facilitate local truces and tries to promote peace through his music.

¹²² Almost all South Sudanese are Christian, and so are most Nuba, but there are also Nuba Muslims. Nuba associations are careful to plan their activities to promote cooperation between Muslims and Christians. For example, a Nuba event in June 2019 started with a prayer from both a Christian pastor and a Nuba Muslim leader. As such, it would be important to involve Nuba Muslim leadership as well.

¹²³ Interview with a pastor, Maadi.

pastors who genuinely listen to the young people, these kinds of people like Daniel Akech, they can help.”¹²⁴

One pastor suggested that the best way to minimize risk would be to have the VIs and OWs be former gang members or “gang-adjacent” people. But they should “work under the umbrella” of a well-respected pastor or community leader who would lend his or her name to the project to give it further legitimacy and credibility and act as the project’s guardian.¹²⁵



Hay el Ashr Market in Cairo. Photo by Paul Miranda, 2020

In our interviews, we used the example of the Nuba Moro tribal association’s football academy in Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus to probe the potential of risk related to gang prevention work. The football academy is designed as a gang prevention activity for young people. The leaders hope that by providing the youth with sports activities along with coaching and mentoring about how to grow up in Cairo, they will be less likely to get involved with gangs. Some participants in the RIT workshop thought that any activities perceived as gang prevention could risk antagonizing the gangs. Yet the Moro leaders in Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus are well known to the gang members. If they perceived the activities as working against them, they could easily threaten the organizers. This has never happened. Most of our interviewees said that based on their experience, the reason the gangs don’t target the Moro leaders is the respect the leaders have with gang members based on the way they interact with them. A former association

leader who helped set up the football academy “treats the gang members with respect, so they treat him with respect.” For example, when he sees them on the street, he may give them a small amount of money or take them for juice in a café. He never criticizes them directly or publicly, so his relationship with them is good, and therefore he can do these kinds of programs.¹²⁶ Others clarified that some gang members support activities that take care of the youth and children within their territory. For example,

¹²⁴ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

¹²⁵ Interview with a pastor/school director, Hay el Ashr. This pastor also agreed that not all pastors or community leaders are well respected by gang-affiliated youth. He fretted that some religious leaders are more interested in enjoying the benefits of their positions than actually serving their communities. As such, he emphasized that leaders shepherding the project should be chosen carefully.

¹²⁶ Interview with a pastor/school director, Hay el Ashr.

some “more peaceful gang members” escort the youth from their neighborhood when they go to play a football match in another neighborhood to make sure they don’t face any problems en route to the match.¹²⁷ If a program is based within a neighborhood where former gang members are involved, the gang members from the same neighborhood are unlikely to attack the program because they see the former gang members as their family.¹²⁸

One of the problems the CV model will face in Cairo is the lack of public space where CV events could take place. In the areas where refugees live, there are no parks or community halls, and some informants thought public events would annoy the local Egyptian population. However, there are places like tribal association community centers, community schools, and the churches—both formal ones in central Cairo and informal ones in refugee neighborhoods—that all could be used to hold such events.¹²⁹ Football pitches could be rented to host large events. For example, in late 2018, after spiking levels of violence, Nuba leaders held a reconciliation between Hayel Ashr and Araba wa Nus youth on a football pitch in Hayel Ashr that can be rented by the hour.¹³⁰ Hundreds of youth attended and aired their grievances, and leaders tried to foster reconciliation. As another example, a Nuba association hosted an event at an Araba wa Nus community school courtyard in June 2019 to celebrate high-achieving students. Hundreds attended, and the event ran for 5–6 hours. It featured speeches from local religious, tribal, and education leaders, performances by the students (including a short skit that touched upon controversial topics such as gang violence, alcoholism, and “early pregnancy”), a live concert from a well-known local Sudanese musician, and a presentation of certificates to the students with their families. The event was big, crowded, and very loud, but there were no issues with the local Egyptian community. Such CV-style events could easily find venues.

The CV model is one idea to support and build on these efforts, but there are alternative approaches humanitarian agencies could use to support these localized efforts. For explanation of additional risks and threats to programming, see Annex B.

Implementing Transformative Masculinity Programming in Cairo

Transformative masculinity programming specifically focuses on changing social norms, so it fits logically with and complements the CV model. Many of our informants viewed the masculinity approach positively, saying it could give youth “a new definition for what a man is,” one that sees peaceful and caring men as aspirational figures of manliness.¹³¹ Masculinity programming could also be integrated with existing GBV programming in Cairo.

Some GBV programs include discussions on masculinity, but they don’t address the masculine norms associated with gang violence and joining a gang. Promundo, an organization that implements masculinity programs, advocates for working in small-group, weekly two-hour sessions for 10–16 weeks.

¹²⁷ Interview with a pastor, Maadi.

¹²⁸ Interview with a former gang member, Maadi.

¹²⁹ Messaging the community should use all the local institutions. For example, fliers about an event should be sent to local community schools, distributed during church services, and sent to CBOs and tribal associations.

¹³⁰ Interview with two tribal association chairpersons, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

¹³¹ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams and Zeitoun.

No current programming in Cairo is as extensive. The curriculum must be developed to fit the cultural context and audience (Promundo et al., 2013), as many of our informants emphasized. Youth themselves, schoolteachers, community leaders, and pastors are crucial for the design of programming. The leaders should enjoy respect among gang-affiliated and non-gang-affiliated youth. Some informants encouraged programming to be built into school curriculums, as recommended by Promundo, to aid in scalability. Others argued to host programs outside of schools as many involved in gang life don't attend school regularly. Sudanese schools aren't always well regarded by youth given their trying conditions. Informants suggested using community centers and churches instead since they often host well-liked and well-attended events. Music (traditional and hip-hop), fashion, art, and football would surely boost participation.

Other pathways that should be considered for violence prevention include:

- Mental health and psychosocial support;
- Increased detection of domestic violence and child abuse;
- Early childhood development and positive parenting;
- Neighborhood and city-wide planning: "Violence Prevention Committees."

These are described in Annex E.

Conclusion

Based on what our informants told us, we believe the CV model could work in Cairo to reduce gang violence and membership. The structure of violence (such as interpersonal disputes that fuel gang violence) and the way violence spreads through the revenge cycle both fit with the way the CV model works, and there is existing violence prevention capacity in communities. Masculinity's role in driving violence and leading young men to join these groups is clear. A combined version of CV with a masculinity approach could be piloted in neighborhoods affected by gang violence. Such a program would put Cairo's service providers at the forefront of global violence prevention efforts and represents an opportunity to make real change that communities could benefit from in everyday life.

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Annex A: Cure Violence Program Results

New York City, USA

The John Jay College Research and Evaluation Center evaluated two NY Cure Violence programs with a quasi-experimental design to estimate the program’s effects on neighborhood violence from 2014–2016. The two sites were the South Bronx and East New York. Each site was compared against a similar comparison area (East Harlem and Flatbush) in terms of socioeconomic, gun violence rates, and levels of pro-violence social norms detected during the first year of surveys in 2014. Using police, hospital, and survey data, the study used two measures of gun violence (monthly counts of shooting victimizations and gun injuries requiring medical attention) and two measures of social norms related to violence among young men ages 18–30 (willingness to use violence in petty conflicts and serious conflicts).¹³²

Violence: The data strongly suggest that CV contributed to declining violence in the two intervention areas. Gun injury rates fell by 50% in East New York while the comparison area of Flatbush experienced only a 5% decline in the same period. The South Bronx experienced significant declines in both measures of violence: 37% decline in gun injuries and a 63% decline in shooting victimizations compared with 29% and 17% respectively in the East Harlem comparison area. (See Table 2).

Social Norms: CV was associated with greater reductions in social norms that support violence when compared against the similar neighborhoods without CV. Respondents’ propensity to use violence in hypothetical scenarios declined over time in both the intervention areas and the comparison areas. However, the decrease was steeper in neighborhoods with Cure Violence programs (33% vs. 12%) and propensity to use violence in petty disputes **declined significantly** only in Cure Violence areas (down 20%). The regression analysis showed that the size of the change in the willingness to use violence in petty disputes was due to the presence of the CV program. This indicates that Cure Violence programs could reduce the incidence of petty disputes before they escalate to more serious

Table 2

Effects of Cure Violence on Gun Injuries and Shooting Victimization in New York City Neighborhoods				
Changes in Violence as Estimated with ARIMA	Cure Violence Sites		Comparison Sites	
	East New York	SE	Flatbush	SE
Gun Injuries ¹	-0.032 *	0.012	-0.002	0.009
Shooting Victimization ²	-0.006	0.021	-0.009	0.015
	South Bronx	SE	East Harlem	SE
Gun Injuries ¹	-0.065 *	0.029	-0.012	0.011
Shooting Victimization ²	-0.033 *	0.016	-0.009	0.022

* Significant difference over time. ARIMA parameters (p,d,q) for all sites were (0,0,0).

Serious Disputes				
	5.29	3.72	3.56	-33% *
Cure Violence Sites				
Comparison Sites	3.97	3.70	3.47	-12% *

Petty Disputes				
	2.14	1.67	1.71	-20% *
Cure Violence Sites				
Comparison Sites	1.78	1.73	1.70	-5%

* Significant difference from year 1 to year 3 (t-test: p < .05).

Data Source:
John Jay College Research and Evaluation Center.

¹³² To measure the social norms, the team use two indices of pro-violence norms based on respondents’ self-reported willingness to use violence 17 hypothetical scenarios involving varying levels of provocation and conflict. They were grouped into petty disputes over intimate partners and other trivial situations and serious disputes over threats to family members, money, debt, and acts of disrespect. The research team used an interrupted time-series analysis for the intervention and comparison areas to account for prior trends and seasonality of violence.

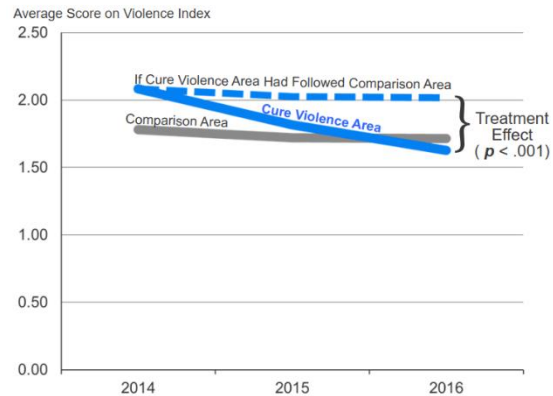
disputes, which would lead to a lower overall incidence of violence in communities (Delgado et al., 2017). (See Table 3).

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

The Trinidad and Tobago impact evaluation carried out by Arizona State University analyzed the local adaptation of CV (Project Reason) that was implemented in 16 bordering urban communities in Port of Spain from July 2015 to August 2017. This ‘treatment’ area constitutes 6% of the nation’s population but was home to 28% of the nation’s murders and 30% of its shootings from 2010 to 2015.¹³³ The comparison area was an aggregate of all untreated communities in Trinidad and Tobago. The data were from four sources: violent crime (five types) reported to the police,¹³⁴ calls to the police for violent incidents, hospital admissions for gunshot wounds, and surveys of residents in treatment and comparison communities.

Table 3

Treatment Effect on Social Norms Supporting the Use of Violence in Hypothetical Petty Disputes



The difference-in-differences analysis showed that the treatment area experienced a significant **38% reduction in the number of violent crimes recorded by police**, whereas the comparison area experienced a 16% *increase* in reported violent crime. However, the two areas were not equivalent, the treatment area had a much higher baseline level of violent crime rate, which is why it was selected for the program. In the synthetic control,¹³⁵ in the 12-24 month period prior to launch, violent crime rates were virtually identical (37 per 10,000 in both treatment and comparison groups) and pre-intervention trends were approximately parallel. After CV’s launch, the trends diverged sharply. One year after launch, the violent crime rate in the treatment area was **45% lower** than the comparison area (22 per 10,000 compared to 40). Two years after launch, the violent crime rate was **45% lower** in the treatment area (18.7 per 10,000 compared to 34.0). These findings provide strong evidence that the implementation of CV was associated with a substantial drop in the violent crime reported to the police in the treatment area.

¹³³ The evaluation used quasi-experimental designs, including difference-in-differences estimates, synthetic control methods, and interrupted time series models. The difference-in-differences analysis comparing reported violent crimes during the 60 months prior to the launch of CV and the 24-month intervention period in both treated and untreated communities. The synthetic control estimator examines rates of violent crime per unit population.

¹³⁴ This included murder, attempted murder, shooting with intent, wounding with intent, and grievous bodily harm.

¹³⁵ Synthetic control selects from a pool of “donor” communities that most closely resemble the pretreatment characteristics of the treatment communities. The selected donor communities are used to create a weighted synthetic composite that serves as a comparison group. As the authors note, the difference-in-differences estimator is not ideal as it gives equal weight to all the untreated units whether or not they were similar to the treated units and it doesn’t perform well unless pre-treatment differences between groups were constant over time. The synthetic control estimator, however, provides a much more valid comparison group.

The impact evaluation looked at whether the **average number of monthly gunshot wound admissions** changed due after the onset of the CV program. Hospital admissions data are a strong and accurate indicator of violent activity. The evaluation looked at Port of Spain General Hospital which was closest to the treatment area and therefore the most likely to experience a change, and San Fernando General Hospital which served as the comparison site. The results showed a clear pattern and significant results. Port of Spain Hospital had a **38.7% reduction** in the **logged monthly shootings** in the post-intervention period. San Fernando General Hospital experienced no significant change. The impact evaluation results provide many reasons for optimism about Cure Violence (Maguire, Oakley, & Corsaro, 2018).

San Pedro Sula, Honduras

The San Pedro Sula CV program results are interesting when thinking about adaptation to Cairo. This evaluation's findings are not as robust as the other two since it lacked external data sources on violence and relied on the program's data. But considering the extreme level of violence in San Pedro Sula and the risks the CV program navigated to adapt to the local context, it is worth exploring. San Pedro Sula is the second largest city in Honduras and ranks at the top of the world's most violent cities. From 2011-2014, the city had a homicide rate of 187 per 100,000 residents.¹³⁶ During its assessment visits, CV determined that local capacity existed to implement a modified version of the CV model that would address violence resulting from extortion/war tax, conflicts between gangs and crews over territory (for war tax and drug trade), paid assassinations, soccer barra conflicts, and violence resulting from interpersonal conflicts. However, the program would ignore higher level paramilitary and cartel violence. During the assessment phase, local partners told how people were killed or assassinated for speaking out against gang violence. As such, CV and its partners carefully adapted their messaging to be anti-violence, but not anti-gang, anti-drug, or even anti-extortion in order not to incite or alienate the "highest risk." Due to a lack of existing resources and services in the target community, the adaption abandoned the outreach component and its case management of the "highest risk." Instead, the VIs were trained on tactics to try and change individual behaviors while doing their interruption work. CV used a three-phased implementation of the adapted model to ensure the safety and credibility of the workers. Local partners needed time to develop relationships and understanding with the "highest risk" groups and individuals in order to lay the groundwork to allow for violence interruption and conflict mediation. For example, maps were slowly developed to identify gangs, crews, and mobs, hot spots, group conflicts, and leaders and other key individuals in the target area. The phased implementation also aided in identifying credible individuals to work as VIs.

The phased implementation allowed for the beginning months to serve as the baseline while the program was being setup. The program covered five zones in San Pedro Sula. Zones 1-3 started in April 2013 and Zones 4-5 started in January 2014. The CV program sites each showed large reductions in shootings and killings. Zone 1 had an 89% drop in shootings and killings, Zone 2 a 64% drop, and Zone 3 a 74% drop. Across all three zones, there was a 73% drop in shootings and killings in 2014 compared to 2013. The reduction in shootings was much greater, 88% across all three sites compared to 14% for homicides. Zone 1 dropped to no shootings during 2014, a streak that went for 17 straight months.

¹³⁶ For comparison's sake, St. Louis led the United States in homicides with 59.3 per 100,000 in 2016. See <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/murder-is-up-again-in-2017-but-not-as-much-as-last-year/>

Across all five zones, there was an 88% drop in shootings and killings in the first five months of 2015 as compared to 2014. As the authors note, “for communities previously experiencing between 19 and 30 shootings each a year, this data represents a massive change. These low-violence reports mean that each community went extensive periods of time without any shootings.” Even in the extreme case of San Pedro Sula, CV discovered that violence is still often interpersonal and frequently the result of “trivial conflicts.” By working with carefully selected local partners, the CV program identified workers, gained access to the highest risk, and mediated conflicts (Ransford, Decker, & Slutkin, 2016).

CV has accomplished impressive reductions in violence, but the model has run into difficulties in some cities. In Baltimore, in 2007-08, four neighborhood programs were launched and a fifth site opened in 2008, but experienced significant difficulties and had to be closed. Implementation difficulties varied widely by neighborhood. Another site had to be significantly altered and implementation was handed off to program staff from a different site. These difficulties made it difficult to properly evaluate the effects of the program and interpret the results (Butts, 2015).

Annex B: Potential Risks Confronting the Cure Violence Model and Masculinity Programming in Cairo

Community Resistance to Initiatives and Risk of Short-Term Programs

Some people in Sudanese and South Sudanese communities actively undermine or refuse to participate in efforts to improve life in Cairo as they believe that attempts to better life will lessen their chances of being resettled.¹³⁷ This concern was also raised by humanitarian organizations during RIT’s workshop. Wide-reaching information campaigns within the community to win support for a CV or prevention program would be crucial.¹³⁸ One pastor said the early stages of any program are always difficult. Some oppose it, others are hesitant because it’s new. Unless you’re giving out money or food, you’ll never get everyone on board right away.¹³⁹ But with sustained effort over time, informants thought it possible to win community support.

Many informants said gang prevention or violence reduction work *must* be funded as long-term initiatives. They argued that short-term initiatives are more harmful than doing nothing. Many organizations have approached CBO leaders over the years and asked them to gather groups of young men for discussions in order to plan a program. The leaders comply, but the “organizations come and give these children false promises that they’re going to do so and so. Then it doesn’t happen, or they start but stop after a short period of time.” This creates a lot of disappointment and anger and makes young people less willing to engage with organizations.¹⁴⁰ This view was voiced by another six of our informants. Some leaders noted that they haven’t engaged on gang issues because they haven’t been able to secure long-term funding. Gang work “isn’t something that when you start, you can stop quickly, it has to be ongoing.”¹⁴¹

Community Support of Gangs: Familial Pride and Tribal Support

Informants also noted that some families directly or indirectly support their children’s involvement in gangs. “There is sometimes a kind of pride in these children being in gang groups.”¹⁴² This can take different forms. Some families are happy if their sons are active gang members because if they have daughters, other boys, gang-involved or not, will be less likely to try and have a relationship with their daughters.¹⁴³ With their sons in gangs, families believe their teenage daughters are less likely to end up

¹³⁷ Interviews with a community activist, Abbassia; pastor/school director, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus; pastor, Ain Shams; pastor, Ain Shams and Zeitoun.

¹³⁸ Cure Violence programs often begin their operations with a series of public events to announce the program. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, the program started with a series of peace and love rallies.

¹³⁹ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams and Zeitoun.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with a CBO director, Barajil.

¹⁴¹ Interview with a community activist, Ain Shams.

¹⁴² Interview with a community activist, Abbassia.

¹⁴³ Interview with a pastor/school director, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

pregnant. Others noted that families condone gang activity more indirectly. A former gang member said his mother never knew exactly what he was doing, but she knew he “was untouchable,” which benefited her as no one would create any problems with her in the street. Some parents support it or ignore the issue because it protects them¹⁴⁴ and many deny their children are active members of gangs even if presented with evidence or eyewitness testimony.¹⁴⁵

Some tribal leaders or elders support the presence of gangs, viewing them as beneficial because it shows the strength of the tribe. Previous research argued that young people involved in gangs saw them as a new source of identity rather than their tribal or religious identities (Forcier, 2009). This point was raised during the RIT workshop in March. The youth may see it this way,¹⁴⁶ but groups may be dominated by certain tribes or sub-tribes. For example, the Ain Shams groups are typically made up of Dinka Awaal, whereas Maadi groups tend to be people from Greater Equatoria. Some Dinka elders in previous years encouraged the gangs “to overwhelm the streets” as a sign of power.¹⁴⁷ To mitigate, it may be important to identify tribal leaders and elders who are more interested in gang *prevention* work. Sultan Noon, the head of South Sudanese Tribal Chiefs Union has taken a positive role in gang reconciliation efforts previously. For other risks and potential mitigation strategies.

Drug and Alcohol Use: Exaggerated Acts of Violence

Drug and alcohol abuse among gang-involved youth is common and many of our informants said addiction is a pressing issue. Drugs and alcohol increase the severity of the violence and the risks that VIs and OWs could face in their efforts. For example, “you might succeed to create relationships with these children, but you can’t guarantee your safety when they’re drunk or under the effects of drugs.”¹⁴⁸ A pastor recounted how after a young man was killed during a violent conflict last year, a leader from the group said to him, “sometimes we do stupid thing, we don’t even know why.” As the pastor said, “they don’t know what they’re doing when they’re high.”¹⁴⁹ Drug use is a new phenomenon among youth.¹⁵⁰ In addition to complicating possible interruption or outreach efforts, drug and alcohol use can lead to conflict and possible violence with local Egyptian communities. For example, the groups of South Sudanese and Sudanese “boys, they hang out on the street and they’ve spoiled the reputation of the community here, getting drunk and hanging out with girls in public.”¹⁵¹ In conservative areas, such as Ain Shams, the presence of gang affiliated boys and girls hanging out together and drinking “make the

¹⁴⁴ Interview with a former gang member, Ain Shams.

¹⁴⁵ Interviews with a school director, Maadi; former gang member, Abbassia.

¹⁴⁶ Despite this finding, Forcier even acknowledged that in 2009 there was an increase in tribal violence among the same youth who previously engaged in “gang violence,” a shift that she argued was unprecedented based on previous trends. Some of the former gang members we interviewed noted that at various times gang activity has been affected by and influenced by “politics back at home.”

¹⁴⁷ Interview with a pastor, Maadi.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with a CBO director, Barajil.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with a pastor/school director, Ain Shams.

¹⁵⁰ Interviews with a former gang member, Ain Shams; former gang member, Ain Shams; school director, Maadi.

¹⁵¹ Interview with a pastor, Ain Shams.

Egyptians furious.”¹⁵² While drug use is a worrying concern, CV assuredly has experience in how to mitigate against these risks.

Neighborhood Groups Attacking Rival Neighborhood Programming

Some informants argued that groups could target programming in rival neighborhoods. For example, “if some groups hear about this program, they could come and try to spoil it by carrying out random attacks.”¹⁵³ Inter-neighborhood coordination will be important, and local leadership in each neighborhood would need to work together to ensure that the groups they’re working with don’t target their rival’s neighborhoods. During the 2013 mass reconciliation, the organizers kept their eyes on members from rival groups who had lingering disputes and anger due to the severity of injuries they suffered from each (fingers cut off or visible scars) to prevent them from getting into clashes or fights during the process.¹⁵⁴

Coordination and Dialogue with Embassies and Local Security Actors

A few informants suggested that coordination and communication with the South Sudanese embassy and local Egyptian government would be important to prevent potential risks if a CV program were to be implemented. A pastor explained that if VIs and OWs are walking around talking to gang members, it would be important for Egyptian police to know what they’re doing. When he undertakes reconciliation efforts, the pastor informs the police and they are fine with it because “our work keeps the peace.” He noted that he has positive relationships with local Egyptian authorities, both formal and informal.¹⁵⁵ By contrast, leaders in Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus said their relationships with authorities are difficult and tenuous.¹⁵⁶ By involving the South Sudanese embassy, it could intervene and help clear up any misunderstandings if the VIs or OWs ran into issues with the police.

Masculinity Programming’s Controversial Discussions

Our informants focused on two areas for risk for masculinity programming, the “sensitive” material that could be included in a curriculum and the reaction of gang members to these discussions. By and large, our informants did not think that there would be a negative reaction from community members if their sons and daughters were having discussions on what it means to be man, woman, how violence connects to these ideas, and how it affects a community. Some topics, such as safe sex or preventing risky sexual behavior could be controversial, though these topics are needed as some pointed out due to issues of early pregnancy. But even for sensitive topics, informants thought that as long as the early stages are planned well, once the community sees the positive effects on the original participants, they will be happy to have their children attend.¹⁵⁷ The reaction of gang members would depend entirely on

¹⁵² Interview with a community activist, Ain Shams.

¹⁵³ Interview with a former gang member, Maadi.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with a former gang member, Maadi.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with a pastor/school director, Ain Shams.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with two Nuba Tribal Association chairpersons, Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus.

¹⁵⁷ StARS noted they received an overwhelmingly positive response from the schools after doing their GBV workshops, with the schools requesting a more extensive and wide-reaching follow-up. While the nature of the conversations in a Program H curriculum would be different, the general themes would be similar.

how gangs and members are referenced in the discussions. If the process of designing the curriculum included a significant role for community members who are respected by gang members, they would know how to thread this needle successfully.

Annex C: Transformative Masculinity Programs to Reduce Violence

Promundo's Program H & M were some of the first transformative masculinity programs implemented and serve as a good example to understand how the programming works in practice. Program H & M were designed to achieve two objectives: attitude and behavior changes at the individual and community levels that lead to transformed gender norms within *specific objectives* and gender equity more broadly. Specific objectives include:

- Reduced attitudes that support physical and sexual violence (preventing violence between young men and gender-based violence, ranging from sexual harassment to rape)
- Reduced rates of self-reported intimate partner violence
- Increased condom use
- Reduced risky sexual behaviors
- Adopt more equitable behaviors towards caregiving roles and household tasks

There have been eight quasi-experimental impact evaluations of various versions of Program H & M, all of which sought to transform rigid and violent masculine norms. The evaluations showed changes in participants self-reported behaviors of IPV and other forms of GBV, condom use, self-reported STI symptoms, couple communication, caregiving, and attitudes towards gender-equality as measured by the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale. In all eight studies the changes were not seen in the control groups and all differences were statistically significant (Promundo, Instituto PAPII, Salud y Género, & ECOS, 2013). To complement these programs, Promundo and others developed the GEM scale to directly measure attitudes towards gender-equitable norms. The scale is designed to provide information about the prevailing norms in a community and the effectiveness of any program that hopes to influence them. The scale covers various areas such as violence, masculinities, gender norms, sexuality, and reproductive health.

The previous implementations and adaptations of Program H & M, however, did not target gang-related violence between men. Efforts to prevent homicide or violence between men with an explicit masculinities approach have so far been rare around the world (Heilman & Barker, 2018). But the programs still provide a promising starting point. In Promundo's study on masculinity and urban violence, the results showed that there were significant associations between highly equitable GEM scores and nonviolence in adulthood. Men exposed to high levels of urban violence who also reported highly equitable gender norms were significantly less likely to have ever used physical urban violence, perpetrated sexual violence or IPV, or used threats despite the strong links between previous exposure, particularly in childhood, and later perpetration (Taylor et al., 2016). While Program H & M did not target gang violence previously, they were successful in preventing and reducing multiple forms of

violence. Furthermore, the links between gender-equitable norms and nonviolence are clear. As such, Promundo argue that Program H & M provide a basis for adaptation to address the masculine norms that lead youth to enter gangs and engage in violence (Taylor et al., 2016).

Annex D: Sudanese and South Sudanese Grassroots Organizing

There are many ways the Sudanese and South Sudanese organize themselves at the grassroots level in their neighborhoods. The tribal organizations and CBOs, women's groups (who already work on gender-based violence and intimate personal violence), pastors, school directors, and traditional tribal leadership and elders (*sultan / salateen*) all play various roles in neighborhoods and cooperate together in various ways. There are around 12 Sudanese Christian denominations and 26 South Sudanese Christian denominations scattered throughout Cairo. The Sudanese and South Sudanese each have their own Union of Churches with a union head. Their activities are primarily religious in nature, but they also cooperate with other sources of community authority on social issues. Most of the congregations have formal churches where they pray in more central parts of Cairo, some have multiple churches such as the Sudanese Anglican church, but many of the congregations also have apartments they rent in their neighborhoods, which they use as informal churches for smaller activities such as choir practice. Some of the tribal associations, CBO, or women's groups use these apartments to run activities (in addition to the apartments they rent as their centers), usually paying the church small symbolic fees. As one interviewee noted, the churches support the CBOs in their social work, they will only refuse if they perceive that the activity has political implications. Many of the Sudanese and South Sudanese CBOs across Cairo are tribal in nature. For example, the Nuba Moro, Kawalib, and Ama each have their own tribal associations that organize events and work on social issues¹⁵⁸ in their respective neighborhoods, but some of the CBOs are explicitly non-tribal. The leaders of these organizations, however, are often not the traditional tribal leaders. The tribal leaders also work in their respective communities. For example, many of the Dinka sub-groups host monthly meetings in the homes of tribal sub-group leaders where they discuss issues and sometimes raise money to pay for surgeries in the community. The South Sudanese tribal leadership is organized into a union of tribal chiefs. Currently, Sultan Noon, who lives in Hayel Ashr, is the chairperson. Lastly, there are the community schools. Some of the schools are connected to specific churches and run by pastors. Some of these schools also have relationships with individual churches in Europe or the United States which provide them with additional sources of funding and allow them to run programming.¹⁵⁹ Other schools were started by educated community members on their own, such as one school in Araba wa Nus that is run by a woman. But these individuals often interact with the other leaders formally or informally and they often attend the same

¹⁵⁸ For example, one tribal association director we interviewed noted that he was organizing a daylong session where community schoolteachers and social workers were going to give presentations on positive parenting to new mothers in their community at their center in the coming days.

¹⁵⁹ For example, one school in Ain Shams hosts a yearly three-day retreat where they work with students they've identified in the school who they believe are at-risk of joining a gang. Additionally, they host a yearly retreat to work with mothers and fathers experiencing conflict in the home to promote "peaceful" home environments.

church services. While the vast majority of South Sudanese are Christian and many, if not the majority of the Nuba are Christian, there are Muslims as well. There are Nuba Islamic leaders in Cairo and the various Nuba groups are careful to design their activities to promote cooperation between Christians and Muslims. For example, during the carnival I attended in June 2019, the event started with a prayer from both a Nuba Christian pastor and a Nuba Muslim leader.

Annex E: Alternative Pathways to Prevent Violence

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and Detection of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Exposure to violence in childhood and adolescence shows strong links to later engagement in violence. As such, targeted support to help youth address the gang violence (and other forms of violence) they've experienced in their lives in Cairo is key. Sudanese and South Sudanese have large families with children of varying ages, and many gang members still live at home. When youth return home with injuries from conflicts, including stabbings and beatings, their younger siblings are being exposed, in addition to whatever violence may be taking place in the home or other contexts. RIT's 2018 research found considerable unmet mental health needs for youth affected by violence in community schools in Nasr City.¹⁶⁰ PSTIC's gang prevention program will begin shortly and includes a large school component to provide mental health and psychosocial support and detect households affected by violence.¹⁶¹ However, given the large number of schools hosting Sudanese and South Sudanese youth in gang-affected neighborhoods, it is worth considering whether PSTIC will be able to sufficiently cover the schools on their own and how these efforts will be coordinated with Save the Children, StARS, and other's work in community schools. Organizations should combine their efforts to ensure that every school is covered by mapping out and assessing the needs of schools in neighborhoods affected by gang violence. Service providers could fill out around PSTIC's program or provide low-level support and afterschool programs. Nearly all of our informants emphasized that it is important to provide young people alternatives to hanging out on the street after school or in the evenings.

Early Childhood Development and Positive Parenting

Challenges related to early childhood development and positive parenting are well known in Cairo, and many organizations work in this area. PSTIC voiced frustration and noted that they're considering

¹⁶⁰ There are 8–10 Sudanese community schools in Hay el Ashr and Araba wa Nus. In 2018, we interviewed schoolteachers and directors from four schools. All informants noted that ongoing violence has visible and noticeable effects on children. Of the four schools, only one had one part-time counselor. The others relied on teachers and administrators to provide basic comfort to students in their downtime.

¹⁶¹ Psychosocial (PS) workers will spend 1–2 days per week in a number of community schools in neighborhoods affected by gang violence. The teachers will identify students showing issues related to violence and then a PS worker will conduct a home visit to assess what is going on in the family and to provide support. Children showing more complicated needs will be referred to community centers that are currently being set up with psychologists to do more intensive counseling. This is crucial as it will also allow for the detection of situations of domestic violence and child abuse, both of which show strong links to later engagement in violence. Overall, this strategy mirrors one of the key approaches of a well-reviewed USAID violence and gang prevention program in Central America (Seligson et al., 2014).

alternatives to the parenting awareness sessions they've done in the past. Save the Children was more positive on the results of their parenting and early childhood work but noted challenges in increasing men's participation in programs. This area could benefit from further research to better understand what has been successful in Cairo, which efforts could be scaled up, or what potential alternatives exist. For example, some informants noted the loss of oral storytelling traditions in Nuba and South Sudanese communities due to displacement and thought it would be more effective to sponsor efforts to revive these traditions while building in lessons on caregiving into them rather than advertising "parenting classes." Promoting fatherhood is an important area for gang prevention (Taylor et al., 2016) and there is an increasing global evidence base on strategies to promote active fatherhood (Heilman, Levto, van der Gaag, Hassink, & Barker, 2017) that could serve as a useful starting point to look further into these issues. However, early childhood development efforts in gang-affected neighborhoods should be integrated with mental health and psychosocial supports and a CV/masculinity program.

Neighborhood and City-Wide Planning: "Violence Prevention Committees"

There are many ways the Sudanese and South Sudanese communities organize themselves in Cairo that exist outside the humanitarian system (see Annex D: Sudanese and South Sudanese Grassroots Organizing). A CV and masculinity program targeting neighborhood gang violence integrated with efforts to work on mental health and early childhood development would require Cairo's refugee service providers to work in close conjunction with the Sudanese and South Sudanese communities. Gangs and violence are too big of an issue for any organization to tackle alone. No organization has the budget, connections with refugee communities, and wide-ranging expertise to address all the various pathways influencing violence across the 7-8 distant neighborhoods affected by gangs in Cairo. To address issues of planning and coordination, USAID's violence prevention program in Central America organized municipal prevention committees to galvanize community stakeholders (school directors, clergy, community development association leaders, police, and health service providers) in targeted municipalities. A representative from each sector sat on the committee and they worked together to implement and adapt the program (Seligson et al, 2014). A similar approach could be adapted for each Cairo neighborhood to coordinate the efforts of service providers and neighborhood-based actors (pastors, schools, tribal association/CBO leaders, tribal leadership, women's groups, and community activists) to ensure that all the programming in a neighborhood is working towards preventing violence.

The Feinstein International Center is a research and teaching center based at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. Our mission is to promote the use of evidence and learning in operational and policy responses to protect and strengthen the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of people affected by or at risk of humanitarian crises.

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The Refugees in Towns project (RIT) promotes understanding of the migrant/refugee experience by drawing on the knowledge and perspectives of refugees themselves as well as local hosts and working with them to develop case studies and reports of the towns in which they live. The project was conceived and is led by Karen Jacobsen and is based at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University. It is funded by the Henry J. Leir Foundation.

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