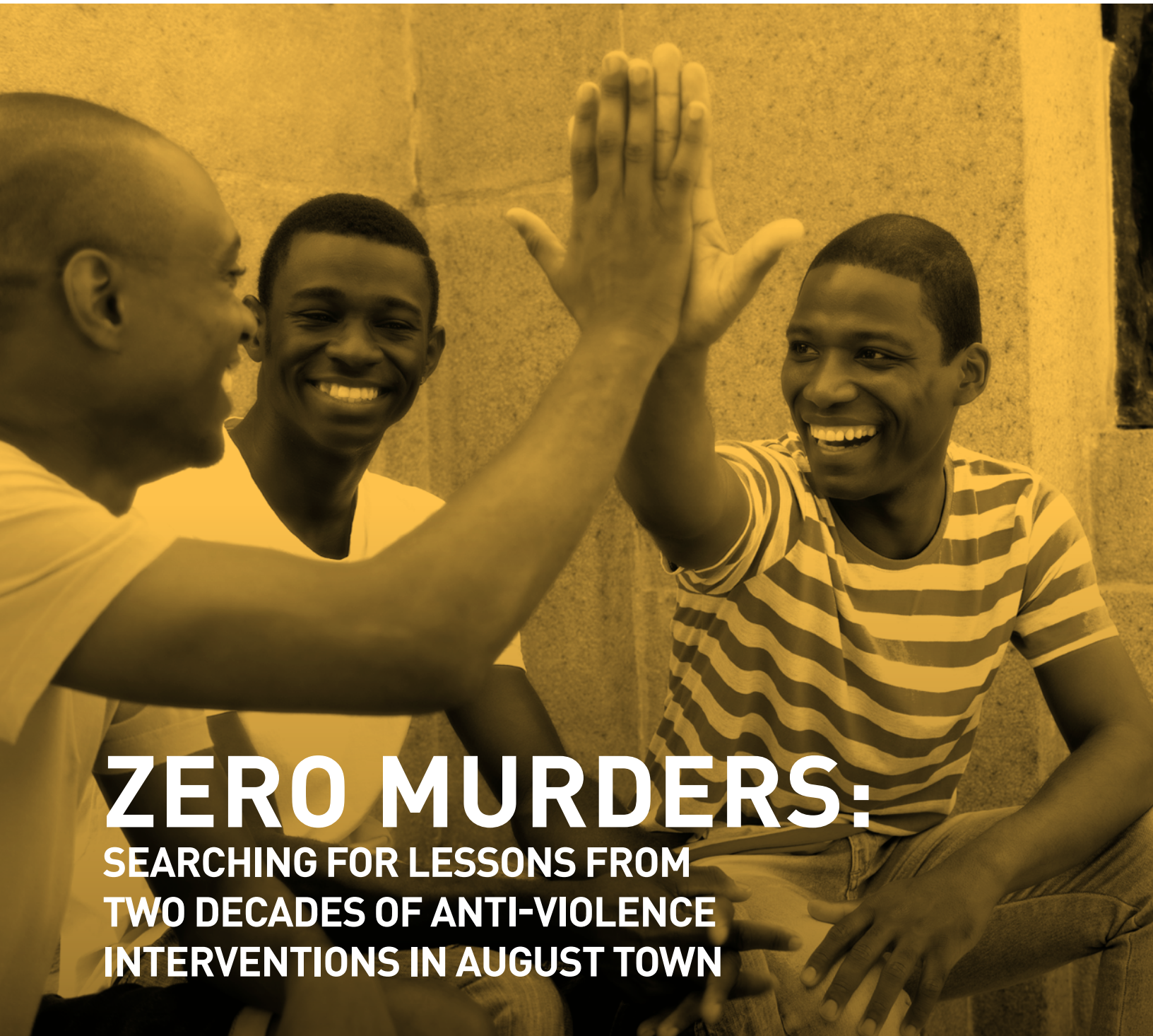




**CAPRI**



# ZERO MURDERS:

SEARCHING FOR LESSONS FROM  
TWO DECADES OF ANTI-VIOLENCE  
INTERVENTIONS IN AUGUST TOWN

**R1902**

SEPTEMBER 2019



# CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	2
LIST OF TABLES .....	2
ACRONYMS .....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	4
<b>1 INTRODUCTION: A YEAR OF NO MURDER .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 <b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.2 <b>LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2 THE NATURE OF VIOLENCE IN AUGUST TOWN .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 <b>THE NATIONAL CONTEXT: VIOLENCE IN JAMAICA .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.2 <b>AUGUST TOWN: SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.3 <b>IDENTIFICATION AS A COMMUNITY .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.4 <b>POLITICS AND VIOLENCE .....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.5 <b>MURDER TRENDS IN AUGUST TOWN SINCE 2002 .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>INTER-GANG KILLINGS</b>	
<b>INTRA-GANG KILLINGS</b>	
<b>CRIMINAL MURDERS</b>	
<b>DOMESTIC DISPUTES</b>	
<b>3 THE PATH TO 2016: VIOLENT ACTORS AND ANTI-VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS IN AUGUST TOWN .....</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1 <b>GANGS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>CORNERS V. GANGS</b>	
3.2 <b>VIOLENCE REDUCTION ACTORS AND PROGRAMMES .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>THE STATE</b>	
<b>NON-STATE ACTORS AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS</b>	
3.3 <b>CORNER MEETINGS MEDIATION, DIALOGUE, AND TRUCES .....</b>	<b>42</b>
3.4 <b>THE YEAR OF ZERO MURDERS – 2016 .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>THE COMMUNITY UNITY AND MEDIATION HYPOTHESIS</b>	
<b>OTHER HYPOTHESES</b>	
<b>4 ANALYSIS &amp; CONCLUSIONS: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM “ZERO MURDERS” IN AUGUST TOWN? .....</b>	<b>47</b>
4.1 <b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>52</b>
4.2 <b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>55</b>

# LIST OF FIGURES

<b>FIGURE 1</b>	August Town murder rate set against overall murder rate	<b>8</b>
<b>FIGURE 2</b>	Homicides by motive, 2012–2014	<b>11</b>
<b>FIGURE 3</b>	Murders in August Town, 2007–2018	<b>21</b>
<b>FIGURE 4</b>	August Town citizens' satisfaction with police performance	<b>34</b>
<b>FIGURE 5</b>	August Town citizens' perceptions of the CSJP's social interventions	<b>40</b>

# LIST OF TABLES

<b>TABLE 1</b>	Voting patterns in St. Andrew Eastern	<b>14</b>
<b>TABLE 2</b>	August Town corners/gangs and their locations	<b>22</b>
<b>TABLE 3</b>	August Town citizens' opinions on the various aspects of police performance	<b>27</b>
<b>TABLE 4</b>	August Town citizens' satisfaction with PMI programmes	<b>33</b>
<b>TABLE 5</b>	August Town citizens' ranking of community-based organisations	<b>38</b>

# ACRONYMS

<b>ATSCDF</b>	August Town Sports & Community Development Foundation
<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organization
<b>CDC</b>	Community Development Committee
<b>CSJP</b>	Citizen Security and Justice Programme
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
<b>GOJ</b>	Government of Jamaica
<b>JCF</b>	Jamaica Constabulary Force
<b>JDF</b>	Jamaica Defence Force
<b>JLP</b>	Jamaica Labour Party
<b>MNS</b>	Ministry of National Security
<b>MOJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>MSS</b>	Mona Social Services
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>PMI</b>	Peace Management Initiative
<b>PNP</b>	People's National Party
<b>SDC</b>	Social Development Commission
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>UWI</b>	University of the West Indies
<b>VIP</b>	Violence Interruption Programme
<b>VPA</b>	Violence Prevention Alliance



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jamaica's extraordinarily high levels of violence undermine citizen security and retard economic growth. Over the past two decades, dozens of state and non-state actors, in a desire for peace, have initiated several violence-reduction/ intervention programmes in August Town. So when, in 2016, the violence-plagued community recorded “zero murders,” all of Jamaica took note. The cries about how this was achieved, which, with the exception of 2016 remain unchanged. After decades of extraordinarily high violence, with a homicide rate of 120 per 100,000, how did August Town achieve this?

With reference to August Town's “zero murders” in 2016, this study explores the various theories with the objective to distil “lessons” from August Town's experience, particularly as it regards anti-violence interventions, with the aim to build knowledge on the different approaches to reducing violence in high violence settings; and ultimately to inform GoJ decisions regarding the direction of and investment in violence prevention intervention programmes in violence-ridden communities.

The study found that the panoply of anti-violence/violence reduction interventions was not sustained, and in the absence of consistent, quantitative programme impact evaluations, there is no way of truly knowing what effects they have had, whether positive or negative, or if they have had any effect at all. Broadly speaking, there is no quantifiable evidence of any of these interventions having had any effect on the social, economic, and violence indicators for the community, which remain unchanged.

Nevertheless, August Town's experience does contain lessons for anti-violence initiatives in August Town and throughout Jamaica's vulnerable, violence-plagued communities. With specific regard to the "zero murders" in 2016 in August Town, even in the absence of rigorous evidence, the community's anti-violence efforts may have played a role, but such efforts generally do not have long lasting effects, nor were they sustained, hence the results were short-lived. At the same time, it is logical to conclude that "zero murders" occurred in August Town in 2016 because some of the most lethal violence producers were not in the community carrying out their regular homicidal activity. It is also possible that both factors—the intensive efforts at mediation and community unity, and the temporary absence of high impact violent actors—resulted in increased traction of the mediation efforts with "junior" violence producers, who may have been more approachable and more easily convinced to hold back from violent action. There is a third theory which has not been thoroughly probed, that influential gangsters deliberately held back on violent activity in order to suit their own personal, commercial and criminal interests, but is nevertheless an important indicator of the low value that key state decisionmakers place on mediation and violence interruption as effective strategies.

The "lessons learned" and the ensuing policy recommendations for August Town, and any other area where reducing extreme violence as it is perpetrated by high impact violence producers is the primary and direct objectives are:

## Law Enforcement

**1** Focus on continuing to build the relationship between the police and the community towards engendering greater trust. The police's efforts to build citizens' trust should be continued and strengthened through continuous implementation of community policing elements, with a view to witnesses coming forward to give evidence to build cases. Everyday policing should be service-oriented, so citizens feel protected and are more likely to report and give evidence. What might have seemed like an obvious recommendation—to remove the most virulent and high impact violence producers from the community—can only be done humanely and justicially if the police have the evidence to build

cases against them. The police need more resources and vehicles to better serve the community.

**2** Together with Jamaica's bilateral security partners, research and better understand the relationship between the overseas gang affiliates and the activities on the ground in August Town, with a view to severing or at least disrupting the flows of information, orders, money, and weapons between the United States and Jamaica.

## Mediation and Restorative Justice

**3** The Ministry of National Security as the primary state agency responsible for citizen security and public safety, should convene all stakeholders, from every relevant level of the state security apparatus, and the relevant leaders, NGOs, and CBOs in Jamaica's violence ridden communities, to form a consensus on mediation, and on other key intervention strategies. Most August Town stakeholders and community members perceive that mediation "works," and their buy-in and participation in any violence reduction effort is crucial. A dialogue should be initiated with the key state security stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the value and efficacy of mediation, so as to remove any ambivalence that may surround the state's support for mediation as a violence reduction intervention, and structure mediation interventions accordingly. Evidence-based mediation methods should be introduced and implemented to strengthen existing mediation approaches, and mediation interventions should be measured to rigorously test outcomes.

**4** Prioritise restorative justice as a means of reintegrating ex-offenders who have returned to the community. This would require adequately equipping the restorative justice centre in August Town, and implementing and supporting the proposed restorative justice programme, in full. Restorative justice is a promising violence intervention method that has been proven effective in violent contexts very similar to August Town. Establish clear evaluation protocols from the outset

of any such initiative.

## Interventions


**5** Violence reduction/prevention interventions should work with existing programmes and organisations in the community and should prioritize sustainability and continuity. Building on existing collective citizen efficacy, local organizations should be supported with capacity building, governance training, leadership training, and succession planning, and new community-based organizations and leaders should be identified and supported. Any such support/intervention must factor in the trust deficit in the community.

**6** Social Intervention programmes must have built in transparent, systematic, evidence-informed programme evaluations. Any further interventions, of any sort, must have built-in, transparent, and rigorous evaluation mechanisms. Interventions should establish baseline measures of whatever indicators they intend to change, against which the

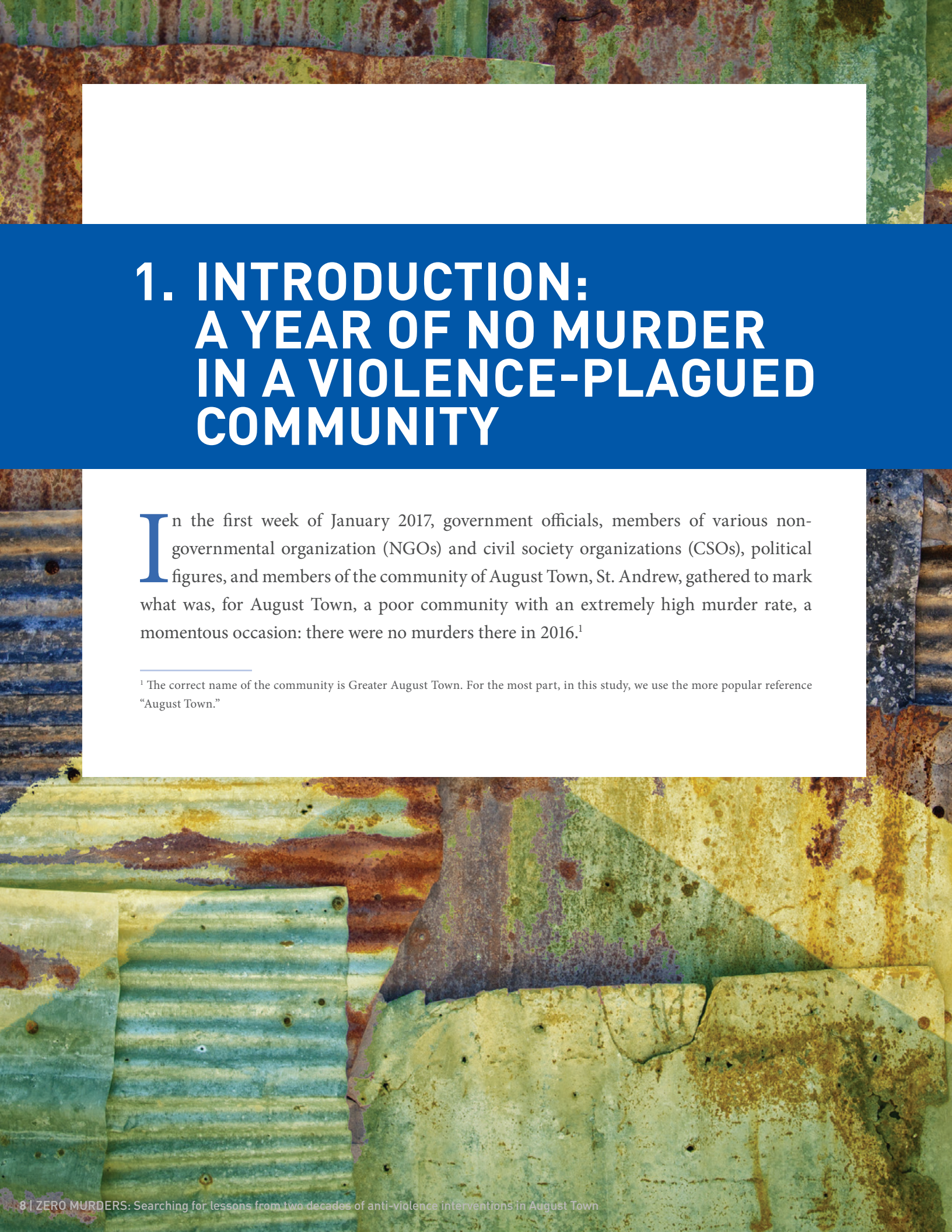
work can be evaluated, and, ideally, include control groups.

Jamaica is not going to solve its violence problem overnight, but the country will continue to spin its wheels and progress slowly, if at all, unless a more coherent (in terms of bringing together all the relevant ministries and agencies to work in a coordinated manner) approach is adopted. For any such approach to succeed it must be insulated from partisan politics, and so not be subject to the political cycle and changes in administration. Importantly the approach and any interventions within it must be based on evidence-supported programmes that are implemented carefully and with a view to long term sustainability. This is a matter of fiscal responsibility, given the enormous sums of money that the government and donors spend on anti-violence efforts, as much as it is crucial to actually having a measurable and positive effect on the problem.





Jamaica is not going to solve its violence problem overnight, but the country will continue to spin its wheels and progress slowly, if at all, unless a more coherent approach is adopted.

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of rusted, corrugated metal. The metal is heavily corroded, with patches of brown, orange, and yellow rust covering most of the surface. Some areas show the original color of the metal, which appears to be a mix of green and blue. The texture is rough and uneven, with many small pits and larger areas of flaking rust. The lighting is somewhat uneven, creating shadows and highlights that emphasize the texture of the metal.

# 1. INTRODUCTION: A YEAR OF NO MURDER IN A VIOLENCE-PLAGUED COMMUNITY

In the first week of January 2017, government officials, members of various non-governmental organization (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), political figures, and members of the community of August Town, St. Andrew, gathered to mark what was, for August Town, a poor community with an extremely high murder rate, a momentous occasion: there were no murders there in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The correct name of the community is Greater August Town. For the most part, in this study, we use the more popular reference “August Town.”

Reducing crime and violence are at the top of any developmental agenda for Jamaica, the sixth most murderous country in the world.<sup>2</sup> Successive government of Jamaica (GoJ) administrations have declared their intention to focus on citizen security and public safety given the universal acknowledgement that violence and crime are among the main challenges hampering the economy's growth. To date, there has been no sustained solution to Jamaica's violence problem, which is primarily manifested in poor urban and semi-urban communities, such as August Town, despite a panoply of violence reduction/prevention interventions having been carried out. In August Town there have been some two dozen such interventions, over more than 20 years.

August Town stands out because it has an extraordinarily high—for Jamaica and internationally—homicide rate of 120 per 100,000.<sup>3</sup> Further, the community has been working for peace for decades. Efforts to end August Town's violence have yielded two significant truces—ostensibly a concrete demonstration of the community's desire for peace—but neither has led to a sustained change to August Town's violence problem. A highly publicized 2008 peace treaty was negotiated between community stakeholders and some of the most violent gangs. There was a previous, less well-known peace agreement in 1998. After both peace agreements there was a decline in murders that was attributed to the truce,<sup>4</sup> but the decline was not prolonged. Indeed, a cursory look at August Town's murder rate shows no discernable pattern, except that it correlates with the island's murder rate in general, for the most part. (See Figure 1).

So, what happened in 2016? There were two incidents of shooting with intent, including one attempt at a reprisal killing that resulted in the wrong man being shot; he was hospitalized for seven months and died in early 2017. His murder was, however, included in the 13 that occurred in 2017, and not counted as having occurred in 2016. And so, taken at face value, with an average of eight murders a year in the years prior, "zero murders" was considered an achievement for the community and an example for the whole of Jamaica.<sup>5</sup>



**When no murders were recorded in August Town in 2016 this represented a dramatic aberration in the data, and different theories have arisen about why and how this happened.**

When no murders were recorded in August Town in 2016 this represented a dramatic aberration in the data, and different theories have arisen about why and how this happened. For some there is no theory at all: it was a blip, a coincidence, luck. For others it was deliberately orchestrated by the violence producers to suit their own interests. There is another view, that the high impact violence producers were not in the community in 2016 (they were in prison), and a corollary view that would-be violence producers were being intensively counselled and managed in 2015-2016. However, it is the conventional wisdom that prevails and persists in the media and in the public discourse: that the community came together, and through various interventions, slayed the violence monster.

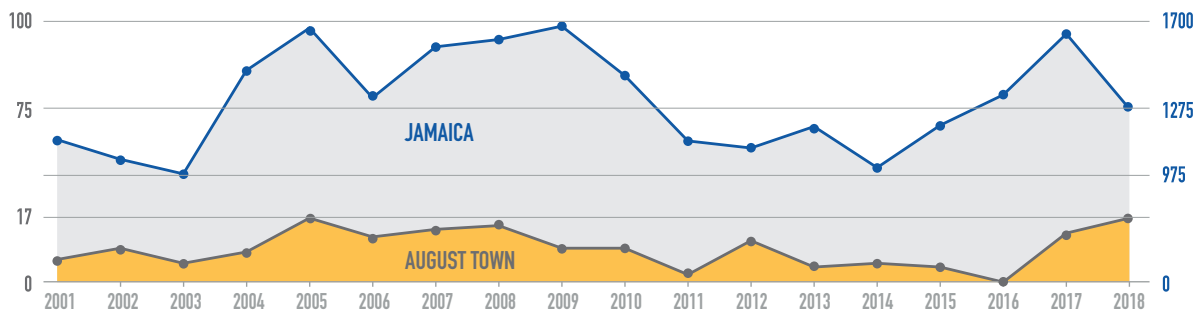
<sup>2</sup> Hideg and Mc Evoy (2017). The "Small Arms Survey" provides expertise on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is a project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated based on an average of ten murders a year between 2007-2017.

<sup>4</sup> Levy (2001).

<sup>5</sup> Keith Steele, Inspector of Police in August Town, 2009-2013 and April 2018 – January 2019, personal interview, January 15, 2019.

Figure 1. Murder rates



Source: August Town Citizens (2001–2011); August Town Police (2012–2018)

This study explores the various theories about “zero murders” in 2016 with the objective to distil “lessons” from August Town’s experience, particularly as it regards anti-violence interventions; does so with the aim to build knowledge on the different approaches to reducing violence in high violence settings; and ultimately, seeks to inform GoJ decisions regarding the direction of and investment in violence prevention intervention programmes in violence-ridden communities.

The first section of the report covers necessary background

information about August Town and its violence problem. The second section reviews the actors and organizations that play a role in the violence, and in the corollary attempts to end the bloodshed. The final section explores what can be learned from attempting to understand how 2016 came to be a year of “zero murders” in August Town. The conclusion suggests measures to be considered in future efforts to reduce murder not only in August Town, but that are relevant to such efforts in Jamaica’s other violence-ridden communities.

## 1.1. Methodology

This report utilized a mixed methods approach to gathering the lessons learned from the violence-reduction interventions in August Town. The term “mixed methods” refers to the integration, or “mixing,” of quantitative and qualitative data within a single investigation. The basic premise of this methodology is that such integration permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than do separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.<sup>6</sup>

The analytic strategy used for this report is a problem-driven content analysis of qualitative interviews, survey data, and existing literature including intervention and project evaluation reports, related to August Town and its violence problem. Content analysis is the analysis of the manifest and

latent content of a body of communicated material through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effect.<sup>7</sup>

A desk review was conducted to consider previous research on the dynamics of violence and on violence prevention efforts in August Town. A survey was conducted among a representative sample of residents which sought to obtain an understanding of citizens’ perceptions on the implementation of intervention programmes and police performance. Focus group interviews were carried out in an effort to obtain impressions of citizens’ experiences of security issues, and their views on the “zero murders” phenomenon of 2016.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (California: Sage, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix.



**Focus group interviews were carried out in an effort to obtain impressions of citizens' experiences of security issues, and their views on the "zero murders" phenomenon of 2016**

Murder-reduction interventions in August Town were reviewed by examining all available documentation related to the interventions, and from in-depth interviews with people involved in all aspects of the interventions. With regard to the criteria for what was included or excluded, we examined those for which data was available, and whose specific stated aim was to prevent/reduce violence and murder.

The survey and focus group data, together with in-depth key stakeholder interviews, were the main sources of data with regard to the outcomes of the intervention programmes. Perception data—the opinions and comments about the interventions and their effects from stakeholders—was integral to the report given our inability to access as much documented data on the intervention programmes as would have allowed us to better understand the interventions' theories of change and outcomes.

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## 1.2. Limitations and Challenges

Documented information on the nearly two dozen anti-violence programmes that have been implemented in August Town since the 1990s, was difficult to obtain, and in some cases, we were not able to secure any; this precluded a thorough assessment of the interventions, and forestalled any attempt to pinpoint any one intervention, or programme, or action that had a particular effect. (In any case that would have been methodologically beyond the scope of this study.)

Many of the key interviewees, given the smallness of the

August Town community, out of a realistic concern for their personal safety, asked to remain anonymous, which we have honoured. Some key interviewees gave us information, and when the formal interview was concluded, they would add details, and sometimes even contradict what they had said on the record. We also received information from people who chose to remain entirely off the record. While the off the record information has assisted in our understanding of some circumstances and events, we are not able to cite it as corroborating evidence.



## 2. THE NATURE OF VIOLENCE IN AUGUST TOWN

The community of August Town has become synonymous in Jamaica with internecine violence and gang warfare. In a national context of the third highest homicide rate in the Latin America and Caribbean region at 56 per 100,000,<sup>9</sup> August Town's murder rate is 120 per 100,000. August Town is an example of the extraordinarily high levels of violence in poor communities in Jamaica, where murders are perpetrated by a few actors, and the majority of citizens in the community are yearning for peace.

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<sup>9</sup> Hideg and McEvoy (2017); Tristan Clavel, "InSight Crime's 2017 Homicide Round-Up," August 16, 2018, [www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/2017-homicide-round-up](http://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/2017-homicide-round-up).

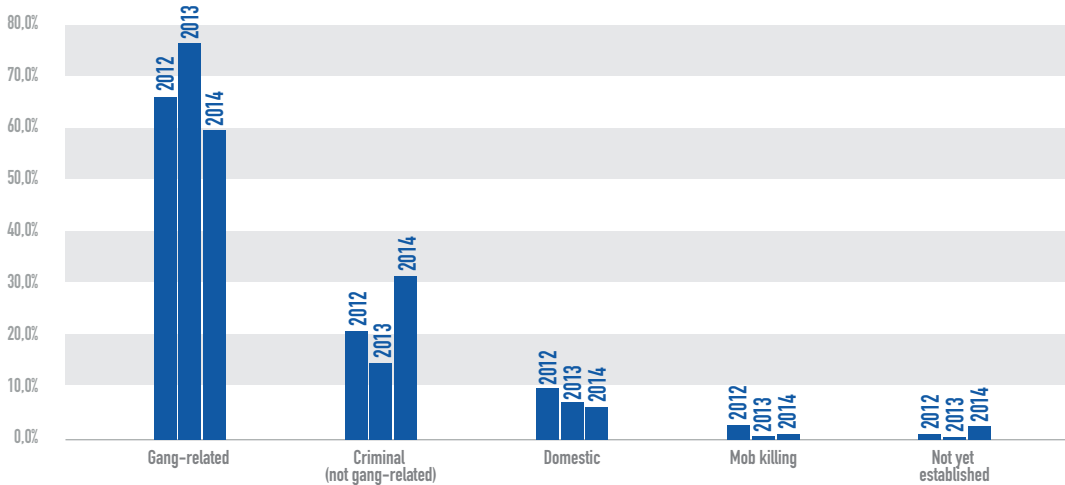
## 2.1 The National Context: Violence in Jamaica

The Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) categorizes murders according to gang-related, domestic, criminal (e.g. in a robbery), mob-killing, and not yet established. Since the mid-1990s, gang-related murders have accounted for the majority of homicides in Jamaica. Figure 2 shows that between 2012 and 2014 the primary motive for murder was gang related; in 2016 this category was estimated to be 70 percent of all murders.<sup>10</sup> The vast majority of murder cases

in August Town are also gang-related,<sup>11</sup> though domestic disputes contributed a significant share of murders in 2017.

In Jamaica, poor urban and semi-urban communities like August Town are the most affected by the high levels of lethal violence. Around 90 percent of murder victims and perpetrators are male; they are mostly young, uneducated, and poor. Most murders are carried out with firearms, in particular handguns and automatic weapons.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 2. Homicides by motive, 2012 - 2014



Source: Planning Institute of Jamaica

## 2.2 August Town: Socio-Economic Aspects

Named after August, the month of Emancipation in 1838, August Town has evolved from a village settled by people who used to work on the Hope, Papine, and Mona plantations, to an inner-city community riven by crime and violence.<sup>13</sup> Located in eastern St. Andrew in the foothills of the Blue Mountains, considered the northern Kingston Metropolitan Region, it contains, together with

the neighbouring area Hermitage, approximately 11,000 inhabitants, in 1,902 dwelling places, over 1.88 square kilometres.<sup>14</sup> The area is densely populated, and one quarter of the community's households share a housing unit with another household. Over 22% of households contain six or more persons.<sup>15</sup>

August Town, like many communities across Jamaica, is

<sup>10</sup> Levy (2009); Latonya Linton, "Dismantling of Gangs Critical in Fight Against Crime," Jamaica Information Service, November 25, 2016, <https://jis.gov.jm/dismantling-gangs-critical-fight-crime-montage>.

<sup>11</sup> The definition of "gang" is contested, and necessarily so given the ongoing transformations of what are essentially, armed groups of violent, mostly young men, but each with different motivations, modes of operation, varying degrees of involvement in criminal activity, and engagement in different types of criminal activity. Further, there is an increasing distinction being made in Jamaica between gangs that are engaged in crime, as different from gangs that are engaged in violence, which while unlawful, is being carried out for violence's sake, not for criminal gain. For the purposes of this study, however, we will not problematize the terminology, and will adhere to the uncontested usage of the relevant terms.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie (2010).

<sup>13</sup> Paul H. Williams, "Dreams of an August Town Rebirth," *Gleaner*, August 7, 2015, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20150807/dreams-august-town-rebirth>.

<sup>14</sup> SDC (2013); STATIN (2011). The area and number of dwellings is for August Town does not include Hermitage.

<sup>15</sup> SDC (2013).

poor, and employment opportunities are lacking. Despite numerous social intervention efforts over the past twenty years, in 2013, roughly 47% of persons were unemployed.<sup>16</sup> Approximately 30% of household heads' monthly income was less than J\$16,280 per month, below the national minimum wage; 23.5% of households earned between J\$16,280–\$32,499 per month; 7.7% earned between J\$43,500–\$86,499, while only 5.5% earned above J\$86,500 per month.<sup>17</sup> Nearly 74% of the households in August Town indicated that household members rely on social safety net programmes. One in every ten household heads reported

that they had gone hungry once or twice per week as a result of lack of food.<sup>18</sup> The majority of the employed are engaged in elementary occupations, craft and related trades, shop and market sales, and service occupations. The employed residents work mostly in the area, at the University of the West Indies, the University Hospital, and the University of Technology.<sup>19</sup> The confluence of unemployment, lack of skills, and the easy access to guns creates conditions that augur well for violent behaviour; in August Town these are manifest.<sup>20</sup>

**August Town, like many communities across Jamaica, is poor, and employment opportunities are lacking. In 2013, despite numerous social intervention efforts over the past 20 years ...**



**Roughly 47% of persons were unemployed.**



**Nearly 74% of households said household members rely on social safety net programmes.**



**1 in every 10 household heads went hungry once or twice per week as a result of lack of food.**

## 2.3 Identification as a Community

The five main districts of Greater August Town are African Gardens, August Town Proper, Goldsmith Villa, Hermitage, and Bedward Gardens, but community boundaries are not

always clear.<sup>21</sup> For example, while most relevant Jamaican state institutions consider and treat August Town with its five districts as a single community,<sup>22</sup> the Statistical

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> SDC (2013).

<sup>19</sup> Charles (2004).

<sup>20</sup> Levy (2001).

<sup>21</sup> SDC (2013).

<sup>22</sup> Relevant state actors that include Hermitage: Ministry of Local Government & Community Development as definer of community boundaries; police division of St. Andrew Central with its own police station in August Town responsible for all five districts; electoral division of St. Andrew Eastern. This report follows the definition of most state institutions and includes Hermitage.



**Corners – a yard, an actual street corner, a lane, or a part of a road or street – are collective social spaces in which residents conduct their daily living.**



Institute of Jamaica does not count Hermitage as part of August Town.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, many people in Hermitage do not consider themselves part of August Town, but as belonging to a separate community.<sup>24</sup> The lack of clarity and agreement on the boundaries can be a factor in violent conflicts, particularly given the dynamics associated with the other models of social and geographic identification, and especially as relates to August Town's gangs.

The other three modes of identification in August Town are relevant to understanding the prevalence of violent conflict in the community:

1. There are sub-districts within each district that were created due to the growth of the community over the years. August Town Proper, for instance, includes the citizen-created (as opposed to state-designated) sub-districts “Vietnam/African Gardens,” and “Open Land.” Many citizens identify themselves as living in one of these communities rather than say they live in “August Town.”<sup>25</sup>
2. August Town has around 30 “corners” which many people in the community identify themselves with.<sup>26</sup> Corners are important aspects of the social life of

August Town; they play a central role in community life, as well as they are a key forum in which identities and allegiances, whether political or gang-related, are mediated and contested. As in many lower-income communities across Kingston, corners—a yard,<sup>27</sup> an actual street corner, a lane, or a part of a road or street—are collective social spaces in which residents conduct their daily living, and where their interactions become incorporated into the group domain and inform their self-concept. In August Town, corners were traditionally associated with political affiliation, and thus with political gangs. As the role of politics diminished, the corners came to be associated with gangs—whether they were newly formed and had no political allegiance or had shed their political function—and became critical aspects of the turf at the centre of power rivalries.<sup>28</sup>

3. Gangs are the third way in which some August Town citizens—generally a small number of highly active impact players who are the main violence producers, and high-risk people—identify themselves.

These modes of identification can and often do overlap.

<sup>23</sup> STATIN (2011); Burke and Weekes (2016)

<sup>24</sup> Key stakeholder interview, August 3, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> August Town citizens focus group, August 25, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Steven Taylor, Inspector of Police in August Town, 2016-8, personal interview, July 27, 2018; Focus group, *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> A yard can be a backyard of someone's house or a public place where people gather. Sidney Mintz, “Houses and Yards among Caribbean Peasantries,” In *Caribbean Transformations* edited by Philip W. Scher, 9-24. Routledge: New York, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Charles (2004).

# 2.4 Politics and Violence

In most, if not all, violent communities throughout Jamaica, what we today call “gang warfare”—specifically extreme violence, violent crime, and murder, carried out by a relatively small number of highly active offenders—is the direct descendant of organized partisan political violence that originated in the heated electoral disputes of the late 1940s. The division of neighbourhoods according to political allegiance resulted in party supporters agglomerating in geographically specific locales. The links between the state and violence, as they evolved in Jamaica, were characterized by politicians’ dependence on enforcers (or “dons”) in inner-city areas to ensure party loyalty and deliver votes; in return the politicians provided patronage in the form of jobs via public works programmes, overseas agricultural employment contracts, cash, food, and housing.<sup>29</sup> To strengthen enforcement capabilities, guns were provided by politicians, and their use was either tacitly or overtly




encouraged. This resulted in close ties between groups of high-impact violent offenders (what would come to be called gangs) and politicians in the 1970s and 80s, and gang warfare and murder were motivated by tribal politics. This is the root of armed violence in Jamaica in general, and in August Town in particular.

August Town was a particularly concentrated den of political violence over three decades, even if it was never a dominant stronghold for one or the other political party. In terms of consistently delivering votes for one party over another, August Town has been unpredictable. Of nine contested elections in this constituency, the People’s National Party (PNP) has won four and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) five. Whichever party has won has done so by slim margins. (See Table 1) Furthermore, the constituency has at times voted against the national trend, implying that the political dynamic there may follow its own logic, or no logic at all.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Harriott (2000); Jaffe (2012).


<sup>30</sup> “St Andrew Eastern: Going Down To The Wire,” *Gleaner*, February 22, 2016, <http://jamaicagleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20160222/st-andrew-eastern-going-down-wire>.

**Table 1. Voting patterns in St. Andrew Eastern**

 Year	 Elected MP Party	 Victory %
1976	PNP	14.42
1980	JLP	38.68
1983*	JLP	**
1989	JLP	9.67
1993	PNP	4.39
1997	PNP	4.32
2002	JLP	4
2007	JLP	5.34
2011	PNP	2
2016	JLP	1.12

Source: Electoral Commission of Jamaica.

\*In 1983 the PNP boycotted the election; \*\* Figures were not available for the corresponding years



New gangs have emerged that are not connected to politics or political patronage, though they may be identified with the dominant party in their community or sub-community.

Nevertheless, August Town's districts were divided into political gang turfs: Goldsmith Villa was a People's National Party (PNP) stronghold, together with its ally the Jungle 12 Gang from August Town Proper. On the other side were the Hermitage gang with its allies, Deuce Lane, and Bryce Hill Gangs, the Jamaica Labour Party's (JLP) factions. Politically motivated killings and gang wars characterized the violence and accounted for most murders in August Town; tensions heightened around general elections.<sup>31</sup> Political gang warfare between the major gangs in August Town escalated in 1993, to the point of threatening ordinary citizens in 1995, as shootouts would happen regularly in the streets.<sup>32</sup>

The nature of armed violence and the context of high murder rates in Jamaica has, however, changed. Political violence has diminished significantly since the mid-1990s, and since the 2000s there have been few instances of violence and murder that can be directly linked to partisan politics. Again, this is the very situation that obtains in present-day August Town, where there has been a decline in politically motivated murders and political violence in general since 2002.<sup>33</sup> Gang

violence and murders continue, but they are no longer related to national politics.<sup>34</sup> Community leaders interviewed for this study were adamant that since the late 1980s, gang warfare in August Town cannot and must not be labelled political, as, according to them, gang behaviour is fuelled by the male ego juxtaposed against social conditions, and unemployment.<sup>35</sup>

Gangs in August Town, as throughout the island, have evolved to contain their own internally determined logic, and are largely independent of politicians. New gangs have emerged that are not connected to politics or political patronage, though they may be identified with the dominant party in their community or sub-community. They have their own sources of weapons, usually financed with the proceeds of their criminal activity, including involvement in organised crime, such as drug and arms trafficking between North, South and Central America.<sup>36</sup> The August Town gangs also receive support from gang members who settled in the U.S. in the 1990s and early 2000s, who have recreated their turfs there, who are also engaged in criminal gang activities, and who maintain strong ties with their Jamaican base.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Charles (2004).

<sup>32</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; Katz and Amaya (2015); Levy (2001).

<sup>33</sup> Mogensen (2005).

<sup>34</sup> Jungle 12 *ibid.*; Focus group, *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Note that these are the community members' opinions and not necessarily empirical or true causes.

<sup>36</sup> Harriott (2000); Leslie (2010); Enrique Desmond Arias, "Understanding Criminal Networks, Political Orders, and Politics in Latin America," In *Ungoverned Spaces, Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, edited by Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas, California: Stanford University Press, 2010, 115-135.

<sup>37</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; Corey Robinson, "Lust For Blood! - Overseas-Based Gangsters Fuelling The Murders In August Town," *Sunday Gleaner*, September 23, 2018, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20180923/lust-blood-overseas-based-gangsters-fuelling-murders-august-town>.



## 2.5 Murder trends in August Town since 2002

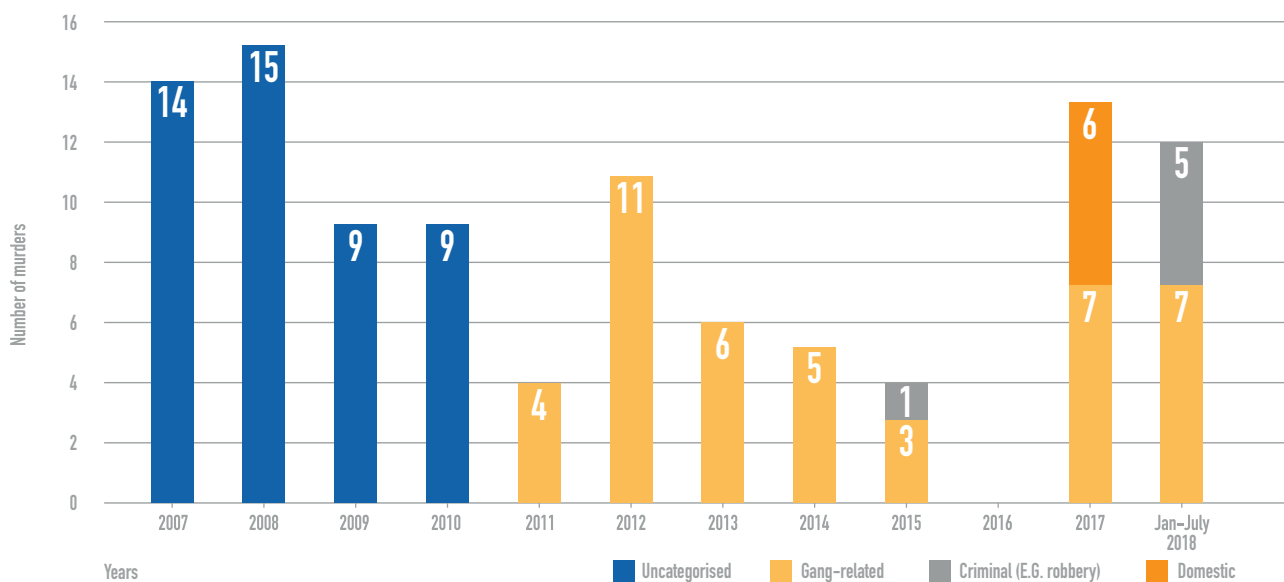
The majority of the murders in August Town are carried out by a small number of highly active groups within which an even smaller number of highly active violent offenders drive the action. These are considered gang-related murders, and this corresponds with the trends for the rest of the country, except that August Town has not recorded any mob killings (in the years under examination).<sup>38</sup>

The 2002 general election was the last where political violence was the principal driver of murder in August Town. By the 2007 election there were political conflicts in August Town, but these were interspersed with a discrete, widespread inter-gang conflict among a number of the violent armed

groups in the community.<sup>39</sup> Thereafter the politics-violence link was virtually broken, a trend which has been observed as a nation-wide phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> Having established that partisan politics can no longer be considered an undergirding factor in Jamaican gang violence, particularly in August Town where the current and former members of parliament, and the councillor, who are from different parties, are viewed as trustworthy authority figures, we turn to what now propels murderous violence in August Town.

Within the dominant category of murder in August Town, gang murder, there are two types: inter-gang and intra-gang killings.

Figure 3. Murders in August Town, 2007–2018



Source: JCF, August Town Police (2018).

<sup>38</sup> These are murders as adjudged by the JCF according to initial police investigations, and may or may not have not gone through the judicial process.

<sup>39</sup> Damian Hutchinson, *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Charles (2004); Mogensen (2005).



## Inter-gang killings

Inter-gang killings are murders between different gangs. The motives for these killings in August Town are reprisal, power struggles, turf, financial gains, and protecting businesses.<sup>41</sup> Reprisal killings constitute the majority of gang-related murders in many communities in Jamaica.<sup>42</sup> Retaliation for a murder can target a colleague gang member or a member of their family. This cycle can go on for years: “Gangs usually wait for the anniversary of the murder, and then they must have the opportunity. If one of the gang members leaves their turf to go party at a bar or so, that’s when they kill him.”<sup>43</sup> From the 1990s until 2005 inter-gang conflicts in August Town were mostly driven by Hermitage and Jungle 12, then the two most dominant gangs; the other gangs were mostly loyal to either one or the other.<sup>44</sup>

Inter-gang conflicts are often fuelled—motivated and funded—by gang members who have relocated to the U.S. and settled there,<sup>45</sup> and who are engaged in criminal gang activities there, in particular the illicit drug trade and gun trafficking.<sup>46</sup> The overseas gang members tend to hold the balance of power, given their greater financial resources, and their instructions are paramount.<sup>47</sup> August Town’s high impact violent criminal gangs also have ties to other gangs throughout the island.<sup>48</sup> The fact that external actors, with such power, are involved in the conflicts is problematic at many levels, not least for the fact that they are outside the

jurisdiction, and prospective mediations are forestalled by their physical absence.<sup>49</sup>

**Reprisal killings constitute the majority of gang-related murders in many communities in Jamaica. Retaliation for a murder can target a colleague gang member or a member of their family.**

Inter-gang conflict can also be diffuse. For example, in mid-2018 the police attributed many murders in August Town to the offer of cash payments from family members and overseas allies of a slain Bedward Gardens gang member. They offered a reward (said to be U.S.\$10,000) to anyone, regardless of gang affiliation, for the killing of anyone from Jungle 12; a Jungle 12 gangster having committed the murder for which they were seeking reprisal.<sup>50</sup> Thus obtained the situation where many of the gangs formed a de facto coalition, fuelled by one gang’s vendetta and bounty offer, and mercenarily targeted any Jungle 12 member.



## Intra-gang killings

Intra-gang killings are between members of one gang. They stem from and can worsen the fragmentation of the gang, which then increases the number of conflict

parties and range of violent incidents, and escalates the murder rate.<sup>51</sup> The main drivers of intra-gang conflict are power and status, including conflicts over

<sup>41</sup> Levy (2001); Katz and Amaya (2015); Steele, *ibid.*; Harriott (2009).

<sup>42</sup> Leslie (2010).

<sup>43</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Levy (2001); Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; “Lust for Blood,” *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Levy (2001).

<sup>47</sup> Kenneth Wilson, August Town community activist and leader, personal interview, August 4, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; Taylor, *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Wilson, *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> “Lust for Blood,” *ibid.*; Alicia Barrett, “Don wants 100 killed for son’s murder,” *The Star*, March 21, 2018, <http://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20180321/don-wants-100-killed-sons-murder>.

<sup>51</sup> Levy (2012).



## Returning gang members or dons often want to reclaim their position in the gang, or to rise even higher in the hierarchy.

hierarchy, women/girls, disobedience of gang rules, money, and guns.<sup>52</sup> These highly virulent violent actors want to show “who is the ‘badder’ one.”<sup>53</sup> An example is Jungle 12’s former don, Neil Wright, who was described as “greedy” and “power-hungry.” When he was still alive, “there was a big dance one night and one of his gang members wore identical shoes [...] and Neil took the guy’s shoes and cut it off, because he alone would be allowed to wear this type of shoes.”<sup>54</sup>

Wright’s own story is otherwise instructive in how intra-gang conflict leads to the diffusion of power and the altering of gang dynamics: He rose to power in 2002, with ambitions to create an organised crime network throughout Kingston and in the U.S. In so doing he recruited high impact violent players from other Kingston gangs and inserted them above original Jungle 12 members in the gang’s hierarchy.<sup>55</sup> The

inevitable division which emerged led to Wright’s murder in 2005, allegedly by members of his own gang. Other dons succeeded Wright, but the gang’s ongoing internal conflicts resulted in those new leaders being killed, and ultimately led to the loss of the status of what had been the most influential violent gang of August Town: “Wi mash up wi ownaself, wi haffi accept that; we started war against one another.”<sup>56</sup> (This was the inter-gang conflict violence that was combined with the political violence leading up to the 2007 election.) Subsequently the loyalties of other gangs towards Jungle 12 eroded, and new alliances were created, yielding a new conflict geography, at the same time as the political dynamic was receding. The overall number of gangs increased after Wright’s murder.<sup>57</sup>

In 2017 a similar dispute appeared to erupt in the Hermitage Gang, Jungle 12’s longstanding enemy. The don of Hermitage went to prison and some gang members wanted to replace him, which caused internal disputes, and is thought to have been behind a number of murders in 2017-2018.<sup>58</sup>

Prison—when gang members are locked up, and after they are released—introduces yet another set of dynamics into the picture. When gang members are in prison, they often create bonds with members of other violent and/or criminal gangs. They then have access to a pool of lethal violent actors who they can commission, whether from inside prison or upon their release, to commit murder, whether of their own gang members to reclaim their position, or as revenge against a fellow gang member or a member of a rival gang.<sup>59</sup> Returning gang members or dons often want to reclaim their position in the gang, or to rise even higher in the hierarchy. This is yet another source of both inter- and intra-gang killings.<sup>60</sup> Indeed the dramatic rise in murders at the beginning of 2017, after a year of “zero murders,” was attributed by some key interviewees to be strongly linked to the release from prison of eight to ten high impact violence producers and their return to August Town, and their subsequent violent attempts to re-establish themselves and settle scores.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Katz and Amaya (2015); Steele, *ibid.*; Levy (2012).

<sup>53</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; Katz and Amaya (2015).

<sup>56</sup> Jungle 12, *ibid.* Translation: “We destroyed ourselves, we have to accept that. We started a war amongst ourselves.”

<sup>57</sup> Katz and Amaya (2015).

<sup>58</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Felix-John and Williams (2013); Harriott (2009).

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*



## Criminal murders

Criminal murders (e.g. in robberies) did not occur often in August Town between 2011 and 2017. In Jamaica, there was a significant decline of such murders between 2009 and 2013.<sup>62</sup> From 2011, there was only one criminal murder in

August Town (in 2015), so the five in the first six months of 2018 is unusual (Figure 3). (Four of those five happened on one single occasion in Hermitage when a bar owner was robbed.)



## Domestic disputes

Domestic violence is widespread in Jamaica: inter-personal dispute resolution is often settled by the use of violence.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned above, violence has become a social norm in Jamaica. In many poor urban communities in Jamaica, domestic disputes—and murder—stem from people's apparent inability to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner, including with how they parent their children, who are often subject to physical abuse.<sup>64</sup>

The police crime data for August Town from 2011-2015 has no record of any domestic-dispute related killings, so when six of the 13 murders in 2017 were attributed to domestic disputes, including an unprecedented murder-suicide, this was unfamiliar. Note that “domestic violence” as the term

is used by the Jamaican police is not limited to intimate-partner violence. The domestic disputes that resulted in homicide in August Town in 2017 included a brother killing brother during an argument; a man stabbing his neighbour in a land dispute; the murder of an alleged attempted rapist that was organized by two women; and the aforementioned murder-suicide of a common-law couple.<sup>65</sup> The research conducted for this study sought to understand the context and background to this unusual variation in August Town's murder patterns, but neither the police nor the key interviewees, including in the focus group, offered anything more than generalisations: “that is how our society deal with conflicts, they murder instead of talking.”<sup>66</sup>


<sup>62</sup> Harriott and Jones (2016).

<sup>63</sup> Glendene Lemard and David Hemenway, “Violence in Jamaica: An Analysis of Homicides 1998–2002,” *Injury Prevention*, 12 (1), 15–18, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Steele, *ibid*; Herbert Gayle, “Light on Violence – Here's why boys join gangs”, *The Gleaner*, January 27, 2017, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20170124/herbert-gayle-light-violence>.

<sup>65</sup> Robinson, *ibid*.

<sup>66</sup> Focus group, *ibid*.



### 3. THE PATH TO 2016: VIOLENT ACTORS AND ANTI-VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS IN AUGUST TOWN

**A**ugust Town has been the recipient of many intervention programmes aimed at, whether directly or indirectly, reducing violence and murder. These interventions have involved state actors, in particular the security forces and the Ministry of National Security; non-state actors and non-governmental organizations; community members in various formations; and various combinations of all of the above. The ongoing objective of most violence-reduction interventions has been to better understand the groups of the



most virulent violent actors—i.e., the gangs—with a view to curtailing their violent behaviour and activities, considering that these small numbers of high impact offenders are the key actors in the murder and violence in August Town. We

here also consider the gangs, who are, for the most part, the primary actors in homicidal violence, and the targets of these interventions.

## 3.1 Gangs

There is a strong empirical relationship between the physical presence of gangs or gang members in a community and the incidence of homicide. For every additional gang member in a community the number of homicides increases by a 0.4 percent, and every additional gang in a community increases the number of homicides by about 10 percent.<sup>67</sup> Some of the drivers of gang violence have been enumerated earlier—rivalries over turf, revenge as a significant motivator, links with overseas gang members—but there are other aspects of the gang dynamic in August Town to be factored in.

### Corners v. Gangs

It is said that there are 10 to 30 gangs in August Town.<sup>68</sup> The numbers vary, in part, because of the distinction made between the various groupings of (primarily) young men.

Some posit that there are three different kinds of groups of young people in depressed violent communities such as August Town: “corner crews,” “corner gangs,” and “criminal gangs.”<sup>69</sup> In general, the people associated with these groups are male, between the ages of 12 and 35, and mostly unemployed (in the formal sector); by and large they are considered “high-risk” for engaging in active violence. The corner crew, corner gang, and criminal gang members can and often do overlap, and a corner can also be associated with a gang.

These groups can be categorized by their degree of involvement in crime and violence, and the virulence of their violent activity, but these are loose and contested demarcations; the police do not necessarily agree on differentiating between the three categories: “The gangs on the corners are all carrying guns, they are all involved

August Town has around 30 corners, and each corner is associated with a “crew,” a group of mainly young people.



<sup>67</sup> “Caribbean Human Development Report 2012,” UNDP, 2012, [www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/Latin%20America%20and%20Caribbean%20HDR/C\\_bean\\_HDR\\_Jan25\\_2012\\_3MB.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/Latin%20America%20and%20Caribbean%20HDR/C_bean_HDR_Jan25_2012_3MB.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; Steele, *ibid.*; Taylor, *ibid.*;

<sup>69</sup> Mogensen (2005); Levy (2001, 2009, 2012).

**Table 2. August Town corners/gangs and their locations**

<b>Corners/Gangs</b>	<b>Area</b>
Hermitage	Hermitage
Jungle 12	August Town Proper
Upper Goldsmith Villa	Hermitage
Lower Goldsmith Villa	Hermitage
Bedward Gardens	Bedward Gardens
Vietnam/African Gardens	August Town Proper
19	August Town Proper
Fire Straight	Bedward Gardens
Dawg Paw	Mostly Papine, but parts of Bedward Gardens
Berry Gang	Bedward Gardens
River	Bedward Gardens

Source: Key stakeholder interview; Inspector Steele interview, 2018.

in gangs or affiliated with one. There is no difference.”<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, the level and nature of gang activity at any given time will suggest which gangs are the most virulent and most powerful. At the time of this report (2018-2019) the police considered there to be five to six active gangs operating in August Town.<sup>71</sup>

Many of the corners and/or gangs have the names of the districts and sub-districts. (See Table 2).

August Town has around 30 corners, and each corner is associated with a “crew,” a group of mainly young people.<sup>72</sup> They have given themselves names, like “19” or “Gaza.” Corner crews are not necessarily partaking in violence, they are more likely to be just hanging out together and enjoying leisure time activities such as playing board games and drinking liquor. Some of the corners in Greater August Town are: Manley Avenue, April Way, Deuce Land, Bryce Hill, Runnings, Nineteenth Lane, Colour Red (Judgement Yard), Gardens, Jungle 12, Open Land, Church Yard, Griz

Close, June Road, Capitol Hill, May Lane, Cool, Vietnam, and Africa.<sup>73</sup>

“Corner gangs” are involved in crime and violence. They carry guns to defend their turf from rival corner gangs and see themselves as a sort of community watch. They are less organized than criminal gangs but are nevertheless likely to be involved in crimes such as extortion and robbery. Corner gangs, like criminal gangs, are usually led by a don.<sup>74</sup>

Criminal gangs are associated with crimes such as robbery, rape, extortion, murder, and gun and drug trading. They engage in these activities for economic gain and to demonstrate and exercise power; murders are often in retaliation for the murders of their own gang members. Criminal gangs are generally involved in organised crime with networks that cross August Town’s boundaries, whether into Kingston and the corporate area, across the island, and/or extending overseas.

<sup>70</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

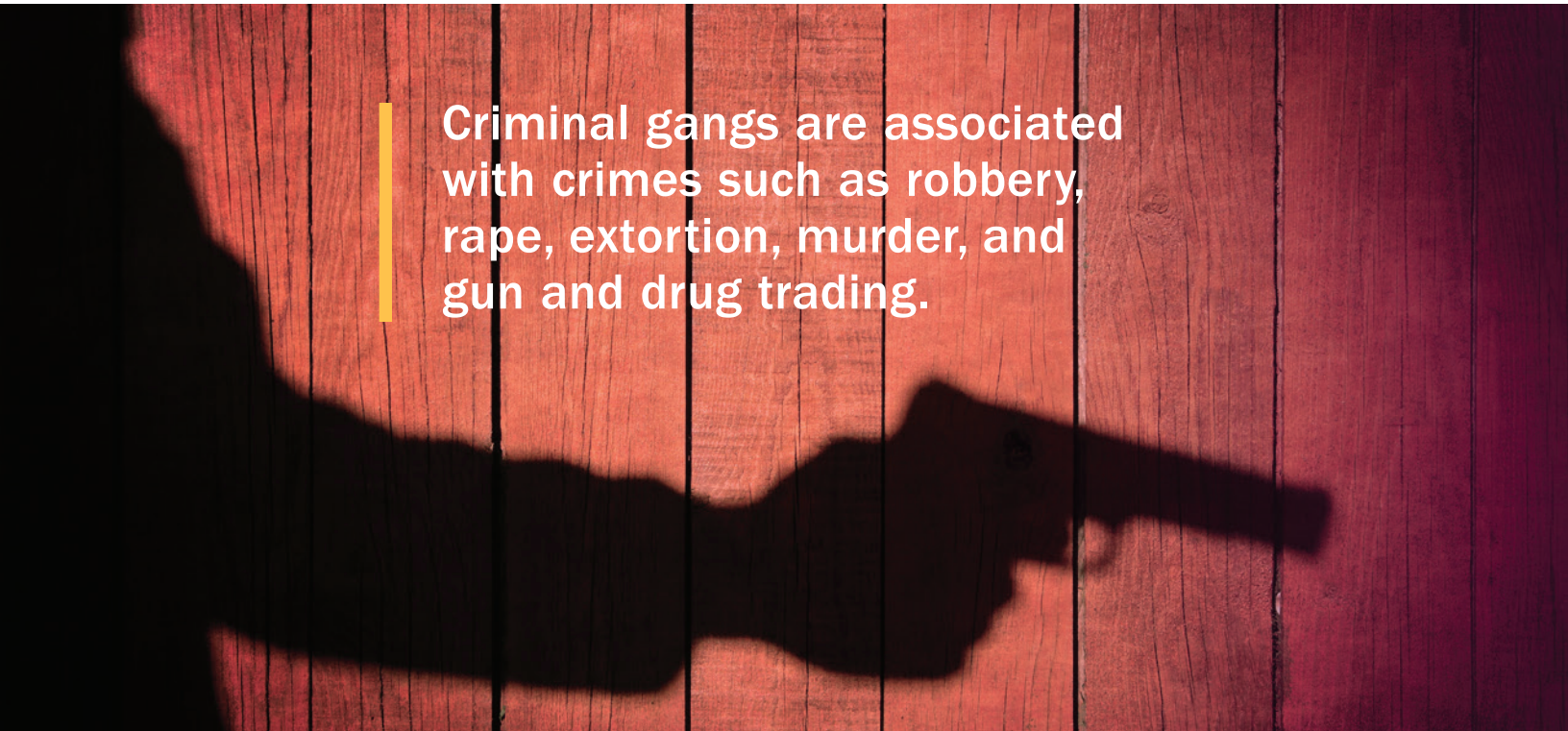
<sup>73</sup> Charles (2004)

<sup>74</sup> Mogensen (2005).

Criminal gangs are also associated with “community justice” or “jungle justice.” These are terms for the punishment, usually swift, of community members deemed by the respective don to be guilty; these include offences such as rape or robbery. The culprits would then be subjected to being beaten (sometimes savagely, resulting in injuries such as broken bones), tortured (for example with electrical shocks), or killed.<sup>75</sup> Gangs take pride in the fact that they keep their turf “crime-free” by exercising community justice: “People are safe in our community, because we wouldn’t allow any of that (rape, robbery or disrespecting elders) to happen here.”<sup>76</sup> It has been widely reported that up until

the mid-2000s the August Town police would send people coming to the station to report something back to Jungle 12 for it to be dealt with. At that time, it was considered that the gang would “deal with the issue much faster,” and the dons then would have had more credibility than police for many community members.<sup>77</sup>

Jungle 12 is, as of 2017-2018, the most dominant gang through its overseas connections and access to guns and money, but it is also the most targeted by other gangs. It is thought to have strongly influenced some three-quarters of the youth in the community.<sup>78</sup>



**Criminal gangs are associated with crimes such as robbery, rape, extortion, murder, and gun and drug trading.**

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## 3.2 Violence Reduction Actors and Programmes

Generally speaking, there are two categories of interventions: formal and informal; in August Town these often overlap. Another way of categorizing anti-violence interventions is primary, secondary, and tertiary, where a primary-level intervention aims to prevent the violence from occurring,

a secondary-level intervention aims to prevent the violence, once started, from continuing or reoccurring, and tertiary-level interventions seek to remedy the effects of violence that has occurred. In August Town, most interventions have been at the primary and secondary level.

<sup>75</sup> Mogensen (2005); Levy (2001, 2009, 2012); Jaffe (2013).

<sup>76</sup> Jungle 12, *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Jungle 12, *ibid.*; Levy (2001); Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; Jaffe (2013).

<sup>78</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

The Ministry of National Security’s website contains a list of (formal) interventions in the island’s five most crime-affected parishes so as “to give a clear picture of the extent and placement, by community, of programme intervention.”<sup>79</sup> There were 13 programmes and interventions listed for August Town, implemented by a variety of state agencies, and a number of NGOs; some interventions were jointly

administered by two or more entities. Whether directly—through in-person engagement with high-risk impact players—or indirectly, through income-generating or literacy training, these interventions have the common goal of reducing violence and improving community safety.<sup>80</sup> What can we learn from these interventions as regards the role they may have played to contribute to “zero murders” in 2016?

## THE STATE

The state is, or ought to be, the primary actor in crime control and violence prevention, and its mandate is to control violent crime as a basic and primary function. The state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force and the provision of security are seen as the most important features of a functioning state,<sup>81</sup> and are normally carried out by the police, and in some places and situations, the army.<sup>82</sup> In reality, however, the state may be unwilling or unable to be the only provider for policing functions,<sup>83</sup> and non-state actors fill the void; the result is a “hybrid” situation where state and non-state actors perform security and policing activities, and exert violence control.<sup>84</sup> In the Jamaican context, violent criminal gangs commonly assume a policing role within their domains; the order they enforce is one that suits

them rather than is aligned with national laws. Powerful gangs that successfully enforce order within their domains may come to enjoy legitimacy among the members of that community due to their efficient provision of a certain security and stability, and the provision of needed material goods to those community members, particularly where the state has failed or is absent.<sup>85</sup> This “hybrid” situation obtains in August Town, not only in the “enforcement” of “jungle justice,” but also, where, in addition to the “regular” state security services, namely the police and by extension the justice system, a number of other actors participate in preventing and controlling crime, in particular violence and murder.

## POLICE (AND THE ARMY)

The police are the primary representative of the state in August Town with regard to security and social control. Their position and role is paradoxical. In general in Jamaica there is an “enormous and terrifying trust deficit between the police and the citizenry, including the gap between police and civil society.”<sup>86</sup> For Jamaica’s poorer citizens, such as those in inner-city communities, poor service (unresponsiveness, absence, corruption) and violence (police

killings, brutality) tend to characterize their relationship with the police.<sup>87</sup> August Town was no different in its police-citizen relationship: “When I came here in 1998 the relationship between the police and the public was terrible. The public resented me, the police were not reaching out to the people, and the citizens were viewed as gunmen,” said a former inspector of the August Town Police Station.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>79</sup> “Crime Prevention and Community Safety Programme Mapping,” Ministry of National Security, undated, [www.mns.gov.jm/content/crime-prevention-and-community-safety-programme-mapping](http://www.mns.gov.jm/content/crime-prevention-and-community-safety-programme-mapping).

<sup>80</sup> We were unable to make contact with anyone at the Ministry of National Security who could say what the date of that list was, or when it was put on the MNS website.

<sup>81</sup> This is considered the “common governance point of view.” Weber (1968); Boerzel and Risse (2010).

<sup>82</sup> Rotberg (2003).

<sup>83</sup> Policing is “any organised activity, whether by the state or non-state groups, that seeks to ensure the maintenance of communal order, security, and peace through elements of prevention, deterrence, investigation of breaches, and punishment.” Baker (2008).

<sup>84</sup> A hybrid state is one where both state and non-state actors perform security and policing activities, and exert violence control. Volker Boege, On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States. States Formation in the Context of ‘Fragility’. Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008, [www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/boege\\_et\\_al\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/boege_et_al_handbook.pdf).

<sup>85</sup> Jaffe (2013); Harriott (2009). The earlier reference to “jungle justice” or “community justice” pertains here.

<sup>86</sup> Ian Boyne, “Police-Citizen Relations Key to Crime Fighting,” *Gleaner*, January 5, 2014, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20140105/focus/focus2.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Harriott (2000); Harriott et al (2018); Jaffe (2012).

<sup>88</sup> Mogensen (2005).



Photo: Shutterstock.com

The police-citizen relationship in August Town has since transformed. The JCF adopted the concept of community policing in the 1990s, with the aim of improving the police-citizen relationship by making the police more approachable, trustworthy, and proactive, and to thus prevent violence by involving citizens in the police's work. For example, one community policing tool is to organise citizen meetings on a regular basis.<sup>89</sup> This trust is needed for witnesses to come forward so that the police have evidence on which to build cases: "The citizens know a lot, they know who these people (perpetrators) are but they won't tell you. They have to grow confidence in you first."<sup>90</sup> In tandem with the nation-wide policy, August Town also adopted community policing practices and principles. In 2009 the police in August Town started to organise community meetings and give out the inspector's cell phone number.<sup>91</sup> This aspect of the police-citizen relationship, improved communication and openness, has become a key strength of the August Town police and their role in violence prevention.

In 2016, the police could be considered to have played a two-fold role in "zero murders": one, they were involved in the organisation of community meetings and corner meetings, which may have helped in improving overall communication between the relevant factions; and two, in their traditional role they arrested many high-ranking gang members whose

absence may have been critical in reducing murder in the community that year.<sup>92</sup>

However, the police-citizen relationship in August Town is far from straightforward, or problem-free. The physical and social geography of August Town, and the nature of its violence problem, lend themselves to the police there being deeply embedded in the community.<sup>93</sup> Their role and actions extend beyond typical policing duties, and they have a direct effect on citizens' lives. Together with their efforts at community policing, this has led to a paradoxical situation where citizens experience community policing elements alongside traditional paramilitary policing, which leaves them with "mixed signals."<sup>94</sup>

For example, the citizens in the focus group responded that police make them feel safe, and the survey yielded a similar impression, with most citizens very satisfied or satisfied with police performance, but answers to more granular questions about specific aspects of the citizen-police relationship were less straightforward. With regard to specific questions about "ensuring people's safety," "responding quickly when called," and "preventing police brutality," only about 30 percent of citizens were satisfied with the police; "preventing police brutality and crime among their own officers" yielded an even lower approval rating (22 percent).<sup>95</sup> (See Figure 4.)

<sup>89</sup> Harriott (2000), (2016); Chambers (2014); Jamaica Constabulary Force (2008).

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

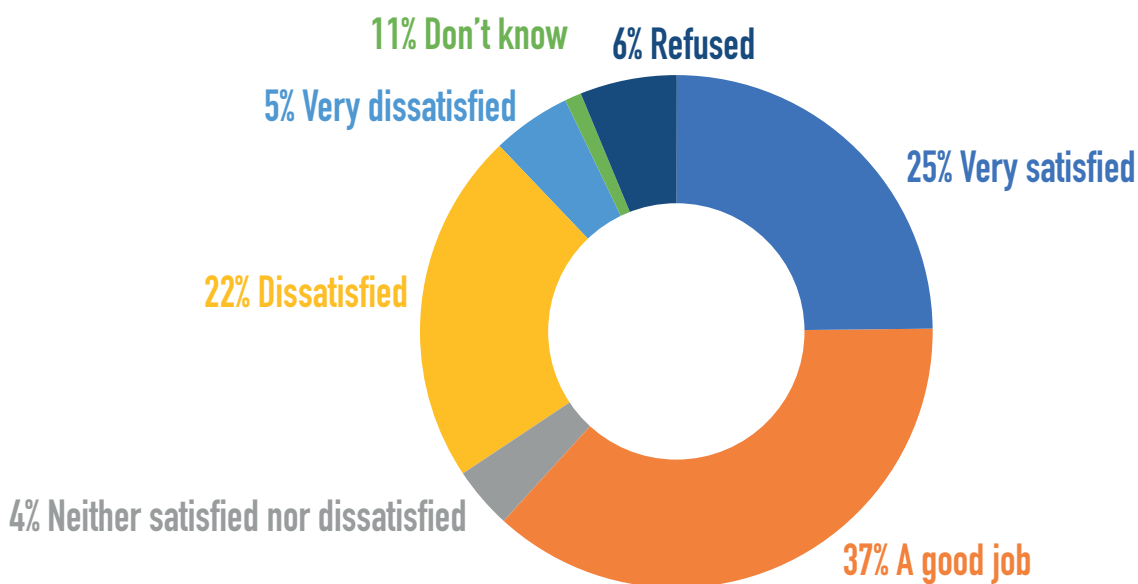
<sup>92</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> August Town's physical and social geography, interviewees and stakeholders mentioned repeatedly, is also conducive to lawlessness, given its hilly terrain and riverbed that make it difficult to police, and which provide a haven not only for August Town's offenders escaping the law, but for violent and criminal actors from outside the community as well.

<sup>94</sup> Harriott (2000).

<sup>95</sup> CAPRI Survey, *ibid.*

Figure 4. August Town citizens' satisfaction with police performance



Source: CAPRI Survey, 2017

As much as the August Town police have been key actors in the attempts at mediation and increasing communication between community members, some citizens consider the police's communication style to be lacking: "They are inconsistent in the way they communicate with the people. They could do more if they would relate to the people. That doesn't mean they have to soften, but to be professional and fair." "You have to explain to the people why you are doing what you're doing and not just tell [them] to do something."<sup>96</sup>

As another example of the dichotomous police-citizen relationship, August Town citizens have different views of the "soft lockdown" technique. Unlike a curfew that has to be approved by the Ministry of National Security and usually lasts from 6pm to 6am the next morning, with a soft lockdown the police ask citizens to stay in their houses after a certain time (at night). This might be prompted by the police having received information about a murder or attack being planned. Some August Town citizens respect these soft lockdowns: "Sometimes you don't know things police know so we trust that it is for our safety and protection."<sup>97</sup>

Others, however, view soft lockdowns as oppressive: "Police has a 'lockdown syndrome,' they just do it for intimidation." "When businesses are open, there is more life and it's safer to travel the community."<sup>98</sup>

The most critical aspect of the police-citizen relationship is the weakest: the trust in police is uneven and inconsistent, and the likelihood of citizens to report crimes to police and give witness statements is very low. Only 21 percent of citizens had the impression that the police "keep information given by the public confidential," a finding that corresponded with the focus group's responses.<sup>99</sup> The August Town police know who the perpetrators are for most murders; to detain alleged offenders, however, the police need witnesses to build a case, and citizens will not come forward.<sup>100</sup>

August Town exhibits characteristics typical of a hybrid state: citizens consider themselves responsible for their own security, but consider the police to have a role in same: "We citizens are responsible for security in August Town, but we also need the help of the police."<sup>101</sup> The majority of people nodded in agreement.

<sup>96</sup> Focus group, *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Focus group, *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Focus group, *ibid.* The quadruple murder in a robbery in a bar in January 2018 however suggests that this is not necessarily the case.

<sup>99</sup> Focus group, *ibid.*; key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Focus group, *ibid.*

Table 3. August Town citizens' opinions on the various aspects of police performance

Areas of Police Performance	% Good Job
Enforcing the law	45%
Ensuring the safety of people	34%
Responding quickly when called	33%
Preventing police brutality	31%
Managing criminal gangs	25%
Preventing corruption and crime among their own officers	22%
Keeping information given by the public confidential	21%

Source: CAPRI Survey, 2017

With regard to traditional policing, the August Town police operate with insufficient resources.<sup>102</sup> The team of 13 officers often only has one vehicle, which makes it difficult to police the community, especially when a gang war is going on. Because of the geography (physical and social) of August Town, the police use two cars to create buffers between rival areas in situations where there is active gang conflict. This literally forestalls drive-by shootings, as well as makes the streets safer for people to walk.<sup>103</sup> To supplement the resource gaps, the August Town police regularly rely on the Mobile Reserve Unit of the JCF and on the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) for assistance to patrol and make arrests. Bringing outside state security means more resources on the ground and is thought to deter prospective violent offenders from acting.<sup>104</sup>

As obtains in many communities throughout Jamaica, August Town citizens respect the JDF more than the JCF officers:<sup>105</sup> “The soldiers are more disciplined and respectful towards the people.” “They just know how to do their job, so

you feel more safe.” “You don’t respect them, you are afraid, because soldiers come to kill. Police is corrupt, and you can’t rely on them.”<sup>106</sup> Even some gang members have respect for soldiers over the police: “Some inspectors here don’t know the community. When they don’t, they have a likkle problem. Soldiers don’t talk, but if dem do, they talk nice to you, dem come and do dem work. They just look at you and you just know you have to leave the road. Police often kick people, cuss dem off and threat dem a go kill dem.”<sup>107</sup>

Along with the police and the army, the state actors involved in anti-violence efforts in August Town are politicians, the Social Development Commission (SDC) with its Community Development Committees (CDC), and the Ministry of National Security (MNS) through the Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP), and the Peace Management Initiative (PMI), an NGO-type organization which works under the umbrella of and on behalf of the MNS and CSJP.

<sup>102</sup> The lack of resources is a general issue for the JCF; see Chambers (2014) among others.

<sup>103</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Steele, *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Harriott et al (2014), p. 104.

<sup>106</sup> Focus group, *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Jungle 12, *ibid.* Translation: Some inspectors don’t know the community, and when they don’t, they have a little problem. The soldiers don’t talk, but if they do, they talk nicely to you, they come, and they do their work. They just look at you and you just know you have to leave the road. Police often kick people, curse at them and threaten to kill them.

## POLITICIANS

August Town is part of the constituency of St. Andrew Eastern, which is comprised of two divisions: Mona and Papine; the August Town community falls under the Papine area. The two elected officials who pertain to the citizens of August Town are the member of parliament (MP) and the area councillor. August Town and the neighbouring communities are currently (2019) represented by the MP Fayval Williams (JLP), and Papine Area Councillor, Venesha Phillips (PNP), who were both elected in 2016. Both the former MP Andre Hylton (PNP) and the current, Williams, are considered people of integrity by August Town citizens and police. The councillor also enjoys wide trust and respect in the community.<sup>108</sup> Williams and Phillips are perceived as very present and approachable by the citizens. Given that they belong to different parties, citizens may naturally “gravitate” to either one of them, but the participants of the citizen focus group suggested the two politicians “should

work together more,” because “people like them and listen to them.”<sup>109</sup>

The roles of politicians and of politics in August Town have evolved over the past 50 years in August Town. The balance of power has shifted from the political representative to the gang or gang leader. The politician is no longer the protector and/or the benefactor and as such has far less control, power, and influence than once obtained. The member of parliament, the opposition caretaker, and the councillors have their official functions as per their offices. Outside of those prescribed functions, the role that politicians play in the community at large and in anti-violence efforts in particular is akin to the other stakeholders in the community. That is, they work—whether by supporting, coordinating, or directly participating—with the community leaders, the police, the NGOs/CBOs, and the community members themselves, towards August Town’s safety and development.<sup>110</sup>

## CITIZEN SECURITY & JUSTICE PROGRAMME (MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY)

The Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP) is an initiative overseen by the Ministry of National Security and funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) (Canada). The programme targets volatile communities with the stated aims to prevent and reduce crime and violence, strengthen crime management capabilities, and improve the delivery of judicial services.<sup>111</sup> The programme works in many fields with other actors and stakeholders such as community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as other state entities. The programme has been

renewed twice: CSJP I 2002-2008, CSJP II 2009-2013, and CSJP III 2014-2020; August Town has been a CSJP-targeted community in all three iterations. This study focuses on CSJP vis-à-vis its role in August Town.

CSJP I in August Town (as in other CSJP communities) was comprised of a number of NGOs who were pre-selected to deliver services such as parenting training, mentoring, adult remedial education, and cultural programmes, funded by the CSJP.<sup>112</sup> Under the CSJP’s auspices, these NGOs staged a number of intervention projects in areas such as mediation, homework assistance, vocational skills training, parenting, and conflict resolution.

**The programme targets volatile communities with the stated aims to prevent and reduce crime and violence, strengthen crime management capabilities, and improve the delivery of judicial services.**

<sup>108</sup> Focus group, *ibid.*; Steele, *ibid.*; Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Focus group, *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Andre Hylton, “August Town’s War and Peace,” *Gleaner*, March 19, 2017, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/focus/20170319/andre-hylton-august-towns-war-and-peace>.

<sup>111</sup> MNS - Citizen Security and Justice Programme I (2008).

<sup>112</sup> There is no existing comprehensive list of all of the projects and interventions that have been delivered in August Town by the CSJP since its inception.





These initial interventions were not evaluated, but people familiar with the projects note some of those interventions were perceived to have had positive effects. The NGO service providers gave completion and activity reports, but evaluation was not built into the projects, nor was an analysis done of the impacts of those programmes.<sup>113</sup> For example, one of the first CSJP activities in August Town was to pave two all-purpose sports courts. These courts, though in want of some maintenance nearly two decades later, are still in use by community members for sports and recreation. Another example is the Kingston Restoration Company parenting intervention programme: a number of people remarked that the parenting group was helpful and effective, given that parents were drawn from all the communities, and their coming together facilitated more than merely parenting training. This, however, was not documented.<sup>114</sup> Significant components of CSJP III's interventions, such as the parenting and skills training programmes, are being robustly evaluated, including with control groups.<sup>115</sup>

One of CSJP II's direct anti-violence interventions in August Town was to support the Ministry of Justice's

Restorative Justice Centre that opened in 2013 to mediate gang conflict, reintegrate ex-offenders, and counsel victims of violence. Restorative justice is "a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offense come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of an offense and its implications for the future."<sup>116</sup> Restorative justice has been empirically proven in many circumstances involving murder, including gang murder, to increase the odds of safety, reduce recidivism and alleviate trauma.<sup>117</sup> The restorative justice process involves dialogue taking place after a violent incident, between the offender and the victim(s), with a view to reducing the risk of reprisal violence/killing. This is particularly relevant to August Town where so many murders and so much violence is due to reprisals. Communities such as August Town, where the power of violent offender (gang) networks and lack of understanding of or trust in the justice system has resulted in a propensity for jungle justice and reprisal killings, are ripe for restorative practices, "which may have the effect of redirecting victims and the wider community affected by a crime away from the desire for vengeance."<sup>118</sup>

<sup>113</sup> The reports on all the early interventions had been sent to the national archive in Spanish Town and could not be located. In any case, those reports would contain information about the number of people who attended, etc., but would not contain evidence about the impact of the intervention.

<sup>114</sup> Monitoring and evaluation personnel from the Ministry of National Security Citizen Security and Justice Programme, interview with authors, April 17, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> Monitoring and evaluation personnel.

<sup>116</sup> "What is restorative justice?" Ministry of Justice (Jamaica) website, last updated 2019, <https://moj.gov.jm/programmes/restorative-justice>.

<sup>117</sup> Michelle Alexander, "Reckoning With Violence," New York Times, March 3, 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/03/03/opinion/violence-criminal-justice.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/03/opinion/violence-criminal-justice.html).

<sup>118</sup> "Jamaican Justice System Reform Task Force Final Report," Government of Jamaica, June 2007, [https://moj.gov.jm/sites/default/files/pdf/JJSRTF%20FINAL%20REPORT\\_6Jun07.pdf](https://moj.gov.jm/sites/default/files/pdf/JJSRTF%20FINAL%20REPORT_6Jun07.pdf).

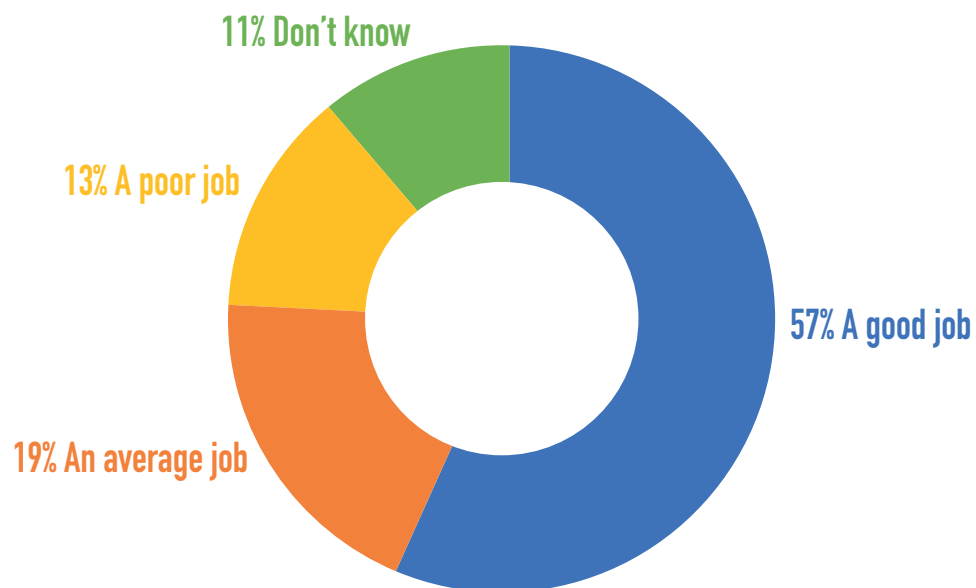
The initiative to integrate restorative justice as an anti-violence intervention in August Town with the opening of the centre in 2013, however, was not sustained. It closed in 2014 because the room where the counselling and mediation took place was poorly soundproofed, and so gang members and ex-offenders refused to participate, as they were concerned they could be heard from outside.<sup>119</sup> Thus this method was not given a chance to be tried and tested.<sup>120</sup> (The Ministry of Justice’s Restorative Justice Unit and its work have not been formally evaluated,<sup>121</sup> but the scholarship on restorative justice has proffered that “all that is of value may not be quantifiable or measurable... success should not be limited by what can be measured by our tradition, approaches, tools... the fact that the ambitions and value of a relationship approach to justice is not easily captured by existing measures does not liberate us from articulating and assessing the achievement of such values in practice.”)<sup>122</sup>

Understanding the role of the CSJP in August Town, with

specific regard to its effect on “zero murders” in 2016, is precluded by the fact that CSJP III, the most recent phase of the programme, was not community-specific; that is, programme participants came from a variety of communities, including August Town. Nevertheless, in the latter half of 2016, a CSJP community case management officer, who worked with social workers and psychologists, provided counselling services for a number of at-risk youth, which may have contributed to forestalling their violent actions.<sup>123</sup>

When asked their opinion on the Citizen Security and Justice Programme, the majority of August Town’s citizens stated that they believed the CSJP was doing a good job, and nearly 20 percent said an average job.<sup>124</sup> Participants of the focus group said the programme ideas were “good” but said they would like to see more employees in the programme and make them work together more with other organisations in the community.<sup>125</sup>

**Figure 5. August Town citizens' perceptions of the CSJP's social interventions**



Source: CAPRI Survey, 2017

<sup>119</sup> Key stakeholder interview, *ibid*.

<sup>120</sup> In September 2018 the MOJ, with financial support from CSJP (now in phase III), reopened an office in the same building as before, and the room for restorative justice mediation was said to be better sound-proofed; the intention is to offer mediation to warring gangs. Kenneth Wilson, telephone interview, September 10, 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Monitoring and evaluation personnel.

<sup>122</sup> Jennifer Llewellyn, Bruce P. Archibald, Donald Clairmont and Diane Crocker, “Imagining Success for a Restorative Approach to Justice: Implications for Measurement and Evaluation,” *Dalhousie Law Journal* 281, April 2014, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2417301](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2417301).

<sup>123</sup> There are community surveys done every two years measuring community members’ perceptions about different aspects of CSJP’s work and its impact on themselves and their communities, and these are done with control groups of communities that have not participated in CSJP interventions. August Town is one of the communities included in these surveys. Monitoring and evaluation personnel, *ibid*.

<sup>124</sup> Representative sample of August Town residents surveyed by CAPRI, 2017.

<sup>125</sup> Focus group, *ibid*.

One of the first CSJP activities in August Town was to pave two all-purpose sports courts. These courts, though in want of some maintenance nearly two decades later, are still in use by community members for sports and recreation.





Photo: Marge Sudol

## PEACE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE (MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY)

The Peace Management Initiative (PMI) has been the most prominent actor in anti-violence interventions in August Town. The PMI was created in 2002 by the government (the Ministry of National Security) to employ “alternative ways to tackle violence that would avoid the bloodshed associated with harsh police repression.” It is a key actor deployed in the context of the government’s Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP), but it considers itself an independent entity, and is very much like an NGO in many respects.<sup>126</sup> The organization works on its own, but more often its activities are carried out as one member of a large-scale collaborative agreement among multiple public and private institutions.<sup>127</sup>

PMI seeks to change the values and lives of youths by promoting a culture of peace. The PMI’s main objective is to interrupt the cycle of revenge that tends to follow an act of violence between rival gangs using mediation, and working

with groups of youths. The interventions seek not to end the violence per se, but rather to manage it, limiting its intensity and reducing harm, and so require working directly with perpetrators of violence and responding immediately to crises, such as a gang killing.<sup>128</sup>

Since its founding, PMI has been engaged in a range of interventions, projects, and activities, all aimed, whether directly or indirectly, at ending violence and promoting peace. The three main PMI interventions are (1) violence interruption, (2) mediation a, (these are both direct,) and (3) efforts to provide alternatives to gang life, which would be indirect interventions. The PMI has done all three of these in August Town, where it was active between the mid-2000s up to 2012/3. The organisation collaborated with, among other entities, the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA),<sup>129</sup> UWI Township Programme, the August Town Sports & Community Development Foundation, and the August

<sup>126</sup> Ignacio Cano and Emiliano Rojido, “Mapping of Homicide Prevention Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean,” *Laboratório de Análise da Violência Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*, September 2016, <http://homicidioslatam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/OPENHOMICMAPPING-REPORT-english-final.pdf>, 111.

<sup>127</sup> Cano and Rojido, , 114.

<sup>128</sup> Cano and Rojido, 110.

<sup>129</sup> VPA is an umbrella organisation that was originally launched by the World Health Organization, and established in Jamaica in 2004. Its objective is to exchange violence prevention information between organisations, and to monitor programmes. Like many such organizations in Jamaica their work is forestalled by funding shortages.



Town Peace Builders Group (last three are non-state actors), in its work in the community.<sup>130</sup>

For its founders, principals, and supporters, the PMI is an outstanding example of effective violence intervention, with an overall impact of an acceptance of the peace objective and the beginnings of a peace-building climate in a wide range of communities.<sup>131</sup> PMI has been formally evaluated twice, in 2006 and in 2009; neither was an impact evaluation, though both attempted, in different ways, to

estimate the project's effects. The 2009 assessment found that "PMI is widely credited by interviewees with stopping the wars in August Town, Brown's Town, and Mountain View – a very significant achievement. They are viewed by the different sections of the communities as having a neutral face and thus trusted to initiate dialogue which strengthens trust."<sup>132</sup> Our survey found that a majority of August Town respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with PMI's work, and their initiatives in the community were well-received.<sup>133</sup>

**Table 4. August Town citizens' satisfaction with PMI programmes**

Peace Management Initiative Programmes*	% Satisfied/ Very Satisfied
Corner Meetings	77%
Mediation	64%
Signing of Peace Treaty 2008	62%
Restorative Justice	58%

Source: CAPRI Survey, 2017; \*Related to violent crime prevention

<sup>130</sup> Levy, *ibid.*; Damian Hutchinson, Executive Director of PMI, personal interview, August 3, 2018.

<sup>131</sup> Levy (2009), 64.

<sup>132</sup> McLean and Blake Lobba, *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> CAPRI survey, *ibid.*



A more recent study concluded that the Peace Management Initiative approach reduced homicides by 96.9% over a five-year intervention period in a violent inner-city neighbourhood in downtown Kingston (not August Town). The study acknowledged that the research design did not control for any other confounding factors that might have influenced violence apart from the intervention, nor was there a control comparator community which had no intervention, which placed constraints on accounting for the findings solely to the work of PMI.<sup>134</sup> Another recent study found that “there are clear indications that PMI, along with other actors, contributed to reducing the wave of violence in some communities, even though no rigorous impact evaluation was ever carried out, in part because none was planned, and in part due to the technical difficulty of doing so.”<sup>135</sup>

## MEDIATION

Mediation work is PMI’s core strength.<sup>138</sup> Various mediation initiatives, ranging from more to less structured, have been intended to help people in a dispute sort their differences out between themselves. In general, a mediator, who is a neutral third person, moderates and encourages the dialogue between conflict parties, but does not give advice or make

These evaluations, as well as other studies, account for the possibility that in areas where there has been a decrease in violence concomitant with PMI’s work, other factors may have contributed, such as police activity, or the parallel presence of other interventions. There is also the methodological problem known as “regression to the mean,” where after a crisis it is likely that homicides will drop, not necessarily as a result of the intervention but simply as a result of the exceptional nature of the circumstances that led to that critical point. So, there is a risk that part of this natural decline will be attributed, in an overly optimistic manner, to the project itself.<sup>136</sup> Further, declines in homicides in areas where the project has been implemented have not always been permanent. Thus, there is agreement that there is no definitive proof of PMI’s impact, but that there are indications that “point in the right direction.”<sup>137</sup>

decisions. The mediator focuses on the needs, desires, and concerns of the parties. The mediator might be a social worker, a respected community elder, or another civilian who is not directly involved in the dispute. Ideally the conflict parties come up with an agreement.<sup>139</sup> Mediation programmes often also extend to the victims, their families,

<sup>134</sup> Ward et al., 989.

<sup>135</sup> Cano and Rojido, 121.

<sup>136</sup> Cano and Rojido, 119.

<sup>137</sup> Cano and Rojido, 118.

<sup>138</sup> McLean and Blake Lobba, *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> “What is mediation?” Resolution Institute, 2019, [www.resolution.institute/dispute-resolution/mediation](http://www.resolution.institute/dispute-resolution/mediation).

and the wider community, with social worker support and counseling. The PMI's most significant work in August Town was to promote proactive dialogue via mediation, what came to be referred to as "corner meetings." In doing this work the organization played a major role in establishing a peace council in 2007 and bringing together rival gangs in 2008 to sign a peace treaty. (The corner meetings are considered in greater detail further down.)

The PMI's mediation efforts in August Town have had mixed results—namely, that any achievements in ending violence were not sustained. The 2007 peace council did not last.<sup>140</sup> The effects of the 2008 peace treaty are contested. Some attribute the subsequent dip in murders in August Town to the truce,<sup>141</sup> while others maintain that the decline in homicides in August Town after 2008 was part of a larger national decline in homicide, and was unrelated to the truce.<sup>142</sup> The extent to which one considers the truce having had an effect determines how long one would say the truce held.

Broadly speaking, mediation as it is intended as a violence intervention has mixed results. It has been shown to bring about a decline in gang-related violence in other places, for example in Los Angeles and London,<sup>143</sup> in Trinidad and Tobago however, three mediation-related gang truces were attempted between 2002 and 2010, none of which lasted.<sup>144</sup> Further, mediation has been shown, in the limited evidence that exists, to sometimes generate a very sharp positive return in the short term, even though it carries considerable

political risk, with uncertain medium to long-term results,<sup>145</sup> and as having a greater chance at sustainability if the processes are embedded in broader social and political transformation processes.<sup>146</sup>

Aside from sustainability, there are aspects of mediation that have proven challenging to the PMI's work, and to the acceptance of the organization's methods. Mediation requires proximity to violence producers, which implies that PMI personnel would possess sensitive information on suspects or high impact offenders who they know through their work, and that they not call the police in the event of receiving information about an impending crisis, lest they lose trust and be viewed as informers. This in turn increases distrust on the part of the police, who view this contact with violent offenders/criminals or probable offenders/criminals with suspicion.<sup>147</sup> The 2009 evaluation of the PMI stated that "police are at times nervous about PMI's relationships with 'shottas'."<sup>148</sup>

Key stakeholders in the state security apparatus appear ambivalent about the value and efficacy of mediation with high-impact offenders, at least insofar as this approach has been implemented in Jamaica. People with knowledge of the state security apparatus in August Town, who did not want to be named in this study, alluded to the police's perception that PMI-type activities undermined their work and weakened respect for and trust in the police in August Town.

**Mediation has been shown, in the limited evidence that exists, to sometimes generate a very sharp positive return in the short term, even though it carries considerable political risk, with uncertain medium- to long-term results**

<sup>140</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Levy (2009); "Peace Brokers – Understanding Good Practice in Violence Prevention and reduction in Jamaica: Situating violence and peace building in Jamaica," Violence Prevention Alliance, Geneva Declaration, 2011. ([www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/img/revcon2011/PMIVPA\\_IssueBrief.pdf](http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/img/revcon2011/PMIVPA_IssueBrief.pdf))

<sup>142</sup> Katz and Amaya.

<sup>143</sup> Paul Peachy, "Send in the peacemakers: An answer to gang violence?" The Independent, October 3, 2014, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/send-in-the-peacemakers-an-answer-to-gang-violence-9773832.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/send-in-the-peacemakers-an-answer-to-gang-violence-9773832.html).

<sup>144</sup> Malissa Lara, "Laventille peace treaty broken," Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, [www.guardian.co.tt/news/laventille-peace-treaty-broken-6.2.332859.901651f10c](http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/laventille-peace-treaty-broken-6.2.332859.901651f10c).

<sup>145</sup> Instinto de Vida, "Latin America can reduce homicide by 50 percent in 10 years," Igarape Institute, Brazil, July 2017, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/11-08-2017-Campanha-Instinto-de-Vida-EN.pdf>, 9.

<sup>146</sup> Achim Wennmann, "Negotiated Exits from Organized Crime? Building Peace in Conflict and Crime-affected Contexts," *Negotiation Journal*, July 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12060>.

<sup>147</sup> Cano and Rojido, 112.

<sup>148</sup> McLean and Blake Lobba, 47.

## VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION

One of the PMI's primary intervention strategies is the Violence Interruption Programme (VIP). The VIP is managed by PMI with financial and case management support from CSJP. The aim is to arrive at short-term outcomes of violence interruption and positive community participation; medium-term sustained violence reduction in the VIP communities through individual and, community resilience; and in the long term, violence reduction through the construction of positive community norms.<sup>149</sup> The PMI's violence interruption interventions in August Town were largely carried out through the Peace Builders, who were trained by the PMI in the requisite techniques. (The Peace Builders are treated in more detail later.)

The Violence Interruption Programme is similar to the Cure Violence model which encompasses a public health perspective on violence. The method is principally to employ committed, trusted community members who have experienced and participated in violence first hand; these "violence interrupters" anticipate where violence will occur, and intervene before violence has a chance to erupt, through engagement with would-be perpetrators, mediation, and attempts to change behaviour and norms.<sup>150</sup> The Cure Violence method has been scientifically evaluated in a wide range of interventions, and found to be extremely effective in impacting a number of violence indicators.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Cure Violence programme, there called Project REASON, was implemented between 2015-2017 in 16 distressed communities in Port of Spain. A rigorous scientific evaluation found that the intervention was associated with significant and substantial reductions in violence, including reduced gunshot wound admissions in a treatment hospital near the intervention area, but not in a comparison hospital located 55 kilometres away.<sup>151</sup>

There has been no formal evaluation of the PMI's violence interruption work specific to August Town, but a qualitative examination of the contribution of the VIP to changes in trends and patterns of violence in CSJP and VIP communities was conducted in St. James (western Jamaica.) That study found that despite their limited reach, and the view of target youth that they were not core violence relief actors (the security forces were,) when the violence interrupters and CSJP community case management officers are combined effectively, they "guarantee youth the greatest ontological security." The Violence Interrupters, according to the study, reached gunmen, slowed those approaching the decision to become killers, and kept violent youth emotionally stable. The study enumerated instances where VIs brokered peace between warring gangs and brought an end to violence in a community after horrific gang murders.<sup>152</sup>

**The PMI's violence interruption interventions in August Town were largely carried out through the Peace Builders, who were trained by the PMI in the requisite techniques.**

## ALTERNATIVE RESOCIALIZATION

PMI, in its attempts to indirectly reduce violence, also promotes alternative paths for former high impact violent offenders, or potential violent actors. PMI seeks to provide resocialization alternatives through productive and educational projects, so that they can leave their gangs, or,

at least, cease criminal and violent activity.<sup>153</sup> This aspect of PMI interventions comprises a wide variety of activities, including community outreach events such as sporting competitions and dances, homework programmes, youth summer camps, residential retreats (held outside of the city

<sup>149</sup> Herbert Gayle, "Ministry of National Security Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP) III. 2018 Evaluation of the Violence Interruption Programme," PowerPoint presentation, November, 2018.

<sup>150</sup> "The Model," Cure Violence, 2011-2019, <http://cureviolence.org/the-model/the-model/>.

<sup>151</sup> Edward R. Maguire, Megan T. Oakley, and Nicholas Corsaro, "Evaluating Cure Violence in Trinidad and Tobago," Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 2018, <https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/9316/Evaluating-Cure-Violence-in-Trinidad-and-Tobago.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>152</sup> Gayle, *ibid*.

<sup>153</sup> Cano and Rojido, 110.





in green spaces) with key persons involved in community violence, and small income-generating projects such as chicken rearing and furniture making.<sup>154</sup>

Some of these activities were carried out in August Town. The PMI twice held out-of-town five-day residential retreats for at-risk potential violence producers from August Town, where “case file work” was done with the young male participants, including identifying their strengths and

## SUSTAINABILITY

The PMI’s work in August Town was compromised, as it has been in other communities where it works, by issues of sustainability. PMI has a limited budget, which limits its capacity to do community work, and compromises its ability to conduct internal training and professional development projects. While the Jamaican government finances PMI’s operating costs, office space, and salaries for the central team, all other expenses must be covered by specific projects, for which the organization must find funding, which makes the organization’s work unstable.<sup>156</sup> Projects and interventions have come to an end, even where they are perceived to be going well and suggesting promising outcomes. For example, the qualitative evaluation of the VIP in St. James found it to be exceptionally relevant, and strongly effective, efficient, and impactful in reducing violence, but there were

weaknesses, and channelling them into opportunities that other development intervention stakeholders might have available.<sup>155</sup> Other projects sought to promote economic development in August Town by providing seed funding for small businesses and other entrepreneurial ventures, such as ornamental fish farming. None of these activities were evaluated; as far as our research was able to ascertain, they did not yield measurable results, and in any case, they were not sustained.

serious issues of sustainability and reach related in large part to the poor funding of the programme.<sup>157</sup>

PMI stopped its work in August Town in 2012-3 due to lack of resources,<sup>158</sup> which means they were not directly involved in the pre-2016 and 2016 corner meetings and mediations. But their work in the decade prior—establishing the peace council, negotiating the 2008 peace treaty, and training and working with mediators/violence interrupters—laid the foundation for the dialogue that is thought to have been so vital to the 2016 peace. Indeed, the PMI’s presence is so deeply embedded that when a new police inspector came to August Town in 2019 he assumed the PMI was still active in the community, and it wasn’t until some months later that he learned that they were in fact no longer working there.

<sup>154</sup> Elizabeth Ward, Kaodi McGaw, Damian Hutchinson and Erica Calogero, “Assessing the cost-effectiveness of the Peace Management Initiative as an intervention to reduce the homicide rate in a community in Kingston, Jamaica,” *International Journal of Public Health* (2018) 63:987–992, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-018-1163-x>, 991.

<sup>155</sup> Hutchinson, *ibid*.

<sup>156</sup> Cano and Rojido, 115.

<sup>157</sup> Gayle, *ibid*.

<sup>158</sup> Damian Hutchinson.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Social Development Commission (SDC) is a state community organization agency that works in 775 communities across Jamaica, under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. Since 2005, the SDC has established Community Development Committees (CDC) in about half of its communities; there is an August Town CDC. The Community Development Committee is intended to act as a “composition of all organisations in a community;

it represents the interests of citizens and is the voice of the community.” The aim is to bring together local organizations and businesses to work together.<sup>159</sup> Members of the CDC are unpaid volunteers. While the CDC is active, it is not perceived as a leading organization in August Town with regard to anti-violence interventions.<sup>160</sup> CDC members have participated in some meetings with the police,<sup>161</sup> and they did participate in some of the corner meetings in 2016.

## NON-STATE ACTORS AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

In August Town there are many active non-state actors, such as community-based organizations (CBOs), that work to combat violence, empower citizens, and provide citizen-policing. These organizations are valued by August Town citizens.<sup>162</sup> Local and external non-state actors and stakeholders have sought to play a role in anti-violence efforts for over two decades; they have often worked together and collaborated on various aspects of their interventions, including with state actors and other NGOs. (While the gangs are key actors in the ongoing violence in August Town, except insofar as they put down their guns, they have not been the initiators or proponents of efforts towards violence reduction or elimination.)

Even before formally named groups sought to intervene in August Town’s violence problem, citizen leaders and local CBOs were working to bring peace. These efforts were an

organic response to the mayhem wrought by ongoing gang warfare and violence, though they may not have been formally incorporated or registered as an organization per se at inception. The local stakeholders’ roots in the community and in the problems of the community meant that they were able to identify the issues with great specificity, they often knew the individuals involved, they had an innate sense of what approaches might work, and they were able to bring in other citizens to participate in creating solutions.<sup>163</sup> In 1993 the creation of the Peace Builders Group and the August Town Sports and Community Development Foundation (ATSCDF) brought more formality to these groups and their activities, the community members having recognized that the gang warfare trend was growing and spreading. In the 2000s external interventions proliferated, and more local groups cropped up. (See Table 5).

**Table 5. August Town citizens’ ranking of community-based organisations**

Community-based organisations involved in violence prevention	% Important
Sizzla Youth Foundation	88%
August Town Peace Builders	83%
UWI Township Programme/MSS	76%

Source: CAPRI Survey, 2017.

<sup>159</sup> Jamaica Information Service, “The SDC, Empowering Communities Through The Work of Community Development Committees,” August 14, 2008, <https://jis.gov.jm/the-sdc-empowering-communities-through-the-work-of-community-development-committees>; “Community Governance,” Social Development Commission website, undated, <https://sdc.gov.jm/services/governance/>.

<sup>160</sup> Focus group, *ibid*.

<sup>161</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid*.; Taylor, *ibid*.

<sup>162</sup> CAPRI Survey, *ibid*.

<sup>163</sup> Schoburgh (2006).

## THE AUGUST TOWN PEACE BUILDERS

The August Town Peace Builders group was founded in 1993 by Kenneth Wilson, a prominent community leader and activist, and other August Town citizens.<sup>164</sup> The organisation is not officially registered and the members are all volunteers. The Peace Builders have tended to join forces with the Peace Management Initiative, the Violence Prevention Alliance, the Sizzla Youth Foundation, the UWI Township Programme, the police, and politicians.

The Peace Builders were key brokers of August Town's first peace agreement between rival gangs in 1998, and are considered to have galvanized the wider August Town community to participate in peace efforts.<sup>165</sup> Their main tools are one-on-one dialogue with persons involved in conflicts (violence interruption), and corner meetings (mediation). Their rootedness in the community meant

that, at the outset, the members were schoolmates and peers with many of the gangsters, had access to them, and were able to engage them.

They have also been recognized for their efforts to bring the police and the community together: "People used to be afraid to go inside the police station. The only time you would find a person inside the station in August Town was when police a lock up somebody or you go to report somebody who commits a crime. Now, because of the work of the Peace Builders and the police, things have changed. Now people walk go inna station go even drink water."<sup>166</sup> The year of "zero murders" has even been attributed to the Peace Builders: "Through various social intervention methods, the August Town Peace Builders reaped its biggest success in 2016 when the community recorded zero murders."<sup>167</sup>



Photo: Shutterstock.com

<sup>164</sup> Kenneth Wilson is a central figure in August Town's peace efforts over three decades. He is an active volunteer (unpaid) in many community organizations working for peace: the August Town Peace Builders, the August Town Sports and Community Development Foundation, and the Sizzla Youth Foundation. Wilson was the UWI Township programme liaison officer from 2006-2015. In April 2018, Wilson and the August Town Peace Builders were honoured by the Prime Minister for their efforts in peace promotion in August Town Community.

<sup>165</sup> Hutchinson, *ibid*.

<sup>166</sup> Nedburn Thaffe, "Good Feeling – August Town Peace Builders Get PM Medal," Jamaica Information Service, May 2018, <http://jis.gov.jm/features/good-feeling-august-town-peace-builders-get-pm-medal/>.

<sup>167</sup> Thaffe, *ibid*.

Given the informal nature of the group's association, and it not having consistently renewed its member pool with younger men over the years, the original members are now much older than the newer generations of gangsters, who do not know them or relate to them as would have obtained

at the outset. There have been no attempts at formalizing the group, clarifying its mission, establishing governance structures, or creating a succession plan. The group, which has played an important role for many years, is at risk of losing its relevance.

## **SIZZLA YOUTH FOUNDATION**

The Sizzla Youth Foundation was started in 2010 by Miguel Collins, who goes by the stage name Sizzla Kalonji, an August Town resident, popular reggae artiste, and himself formerly involved in August Town gang activity.<sup>168</sup> The stated mission of the organisation is to increase literacy by encouraging young people in August Town to study. According to the organisation, they host drama and modeling classes, but they claim their most important role is as a moral authority promoting mediation and peace in August Town, based on Rastafarian religious beliefs. The organisation is not officially registered and the members are unpaid volunteers.

The foundation is thought to have played an important role in the 2016 “zero murders” by participating in and organising corner meetings. Sizzla (through the foundation, which he funds personally) has been a central figure in staging large community events, such as the “August Town Emancipation Birthday” in 2015, which aim to bring people together in a peaceful, celebratory way. However the foundation is not well organized, and its activities are directed by Sizzla without any set programming, and thus dependent on his availability and inclinations.<sup>169</sup>

## **AUGUST TOWN SPORTS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION**

The August Town Sports & Community Development Foundation (ATSCDF) was founded in 1996 by Kenneth Wilson in response to tensions brought about by gang violence. In the past the organization was funded by the Mennonite Central Committee (the international faith-based outreach/donor arm of the Eastern Mennonite University, who has done work in Jamaica over many years, including on the country's Restorative Justice Policy,) and has received support from Jamaican companies, such as the Jamaica Money Market Brokers and Western Sports, a financial institution and sporting goods store respectively. The idea at the time of its founding was to use football as a tool against violence through sports discipline, to enhance the socialization process, and to manage sports rivalry. The target group is young men 8-20 years; they participate in two football teams, as well as in conflict resolution classes, human rights education, and life skills. The ATSCDF has helped to send young leaders, both men and women,

to university, and groups of community members have attended conflict resolution training in the United States.<sup>170</sup>

One of the ATSCDF's signature projects is the “Safe Community Competition,” organized by ATSCDF together with the August Town Peace Builders, VPA, and the PMI.<sup>171</sup> This competition seeks to motivate the sub-communities to reduce violent incidents, including shootings and murders. It started in 2011 and is, as of this writing (2019), still ongoing; communities must meet certain criteria, and coupled with data from the August Town Police, a sub-community is declared the winner and receives the Barry Chevannes Trophy.<sup>172</sup>

The August Town Sports and Community Development Foundation was considered at one point to be “holding the community together,”<sup>173</sup> but a 2014 study of the ATSCDF and its role in promoting sports as a means of violence prevention in general, found it has had little impact by way of social and economic change. The study, using information

<sup>168</sup> “Sizzla gets 24 hours to leave August Town,” *Observer*, September 3, 2004.

<sup>169</sup> Member Sizzla Youth Foundation, telephone interview, August 13, 2018.

<sup>170</sup> Kenneth Wilson, telephone interview with authors, August 31, 2018.

<sup>171</sup> Kenneth Wilson, telephone interview with authors, May 10, 2019.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*; Mona Social Services, “Annual Report 2011-2012,” [www.mona.uwi.edu/principal/principal/sites/default/files/principal/uploads/mss\\_2011-2012.pdf](http://www.mona.uwi.edu/principal/principal/sites/default/files/principal/uploads/mss_2011-2012.pdf). The late Barry Chevannes, an eminent UWI sociology professor, was a key figure in promoting the university's engagement with August Town.

<sup>173</sup> Levy (2012), 17.

gathered from focus groups and key interviews, found that while playing football in the community was found to be a part of a shared experience of residents, and the corner matches helped form new perceptions about individuals living in the community and created a sense of togetherness amongst persons, the normative behaviour of collectivism was only apparent when the game was being played, and did not move beyond that space through self-reflection to collective action. Further, while the games brought persons together, and the playing of football allowed, at times, for reconciliation between persons, they were also the sites of fights after matches. Residents suggested that “football cause

the violence too” in the community and that sometime people “carry feelings” and “grudges” and come to the football matches to “settle things.”

Nevertheless, the study’s authors, while suggesting that the ATSDCF has more work to do if its objective to use sports as a primary tool against violence is to be fully met, recommended that the community’s corner league football be examined more closely, treated as a community development project, and adequately financed to bring about better structure and revenue to the community and its residents, in the quest to use sports as a holistic tool against violence.<sup>174</sup>



## THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, MONA

Since the university, which neighbours August Town, was established in 1948, it has had a symbiotic relationship with the community. The UWI has contributed to the community by purchasing goods, products, and services, and in return

the university has benefitted from the supply of labour.<sup>175</sup>

In 2006 the university embarked on a structured engagement with August Town towards its development.

<sup>174</sup> Olivene Burke, Tarik Weekes, and Wanda Costen, “The Impact of Sport on Community Development in Greater August Town, Jamaica,” *Athens Journal of Sports* 1 (3), 189-202, <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajspo.1-3-4> doi=10.30958/ajspo.1-3-4.

<sup>175</sup> Olivene Burke and Tarik Weekes, “The UWI Mona Campus as an Anchor Institution: An Educational Perspective,” *Journal on Anchor Institutions and Communities*, 1, 11-20. [www.margainc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AITF\\_Journal\\_2016\\_Vol\\_1.pdf](http://www.margainc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AITF_Journal_2016_Vol_1.pdf)

The UWI Township Programme, which in 2008 was renamed Mona Social Services (MSS), worked through a “six pillars approach” to community development: education, sports and culture, entrepreneurship, peace, health, and crime and violence reduction.<sup>176</sup> In 2009 UWI’s engagement with August Town was described by Horace Levy, a key figure in the PMI, as being an “on-going project of the University of the West Indies (UWI) to make it into a ‘university town.’”<sup>177</sup> Between 2011-2014 the UWI Township Programme worked together with the other active state and non-state actors and their anti-violence programmes, namely the Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP), the Peace Management Initiative (PMI), the August Town

Peace Builders, the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA), as well as churches, the police, and politicians. Their main activities were corner meetings and parenting workshops, and their initiatives included a “Good-People Association Neighbourhood Watch.”<sup>178</sup>

The university has been lauded for its “work which helped in part in the dramatic reduction in the murder rate in 2016.”<sup>179</sup> This would have been the work it did in the decade leading up to 2016, as well as direct participation. The UWI Township closed its office in August Town in 2015 because of concerns its staff raised of being able to adequately offer confidentiality to its clients,<sup>180</sup> but engagement with the community continues.

**The University of the West Indies has been lauded for its “work which helped in part in the dramatic reduction in the murder rate in 2016.”**

### 3.3 Corner Meetings, Mediation, Dialogue and Truces

Of the various projects and interventions, the signal anti-violence activity of the above state and non-state actors in August Town, often working together, was the corner meeting. The corner meetings are a combination of mediation and violence interruption. Corner meetings were originally, largely, the PMI’s initiative, but came to be an integral aspect of the community’s efforts to stop violence, particularly pre-2016. Meeting the gang members where they were, on their own turf, was effective in initiating dialogue: “Di peace people dem [...] have to mek di first step [...] we are always ready.” The corner meetings helped to make “di youth dem heard.” Politicians, like the MP and the councillor, would “just have big meetings and never sit down with wi.”<sup>181</sup> The efforts to bring the various actors together helped to create a sense of community in August Town: “Communities where residents feel engaged and share a belief in the community’s capability to act (e.g. to

prevent children skipping school and hanging out on the street corner) tend to have lower rates of violence.”<sup>182</sup>

This engagement, interaction, and communication led to the three most significant symbols of peace in August Town. Though the 2008 peace treaty has received a great deal of media and scholarly attention, it was in fact not the first truce between August Town’s warring gangs. After the gang conflict between Hermitage and Jungle 12 escalated in 1993 and became a major threat to the lives of ordinary citizens in 1995, the August Town Peace Builders offered inter-gang mediation. A peace agreement was then arrived at between the main fighting gangs of August Town Proper and Hermitage in 1998. The agreement was motivated by the gangs’ own fear of getting killed sooner or later; the desire for freedom to enjoy their leisure time without the fear of getting killed; and by the possibility of making a living outside of

<sup>176</sup> Mona Social Services, “Annual Report 2015-2016,”; Mona Social Services, “Annual Report 2016-2017.”

<sup>177</sup> Levy (2009), 63.

<sup>178</sup> Mona Social Services, “Annual Report 2013-2014,” [www.jsif.org/sites/default/files/Annual%20Report%202014%20-%202015\\_0.pdf](http://www.jsif.org/sites/default/files/Annual%20Report%202014%20-%202015_0.pdf).

<sup>179</sup> Winston Adams, “Role of Tertiary Education Institutions in Fighting Violent Crime in Jamaica,” July 30, 2017, [www.ucc.edu.jm/chairmans-blog/2017/role-of-tertiary-education-institutions-in-fighting-violent-crime-in-jamaica](http://www.ucc.edu.jm/chairmans-blog/2017/role-of-tertiary-education-institutions-in-fighting-violent-crime-in-jamaica).

<sup>180</sup> Olivene Burke, Executive Officer of the Mona Social Services, telephone interview, September 17, 2018.

<sup>181</sup> Jungle 12, *ibid.* Translation: The peace people have to make the first step; we are always ready. The corner meetings helped the youths to be heard. Politicians only have big meetings and never sit down with us.

<sup>182</sup> McLean and Blake Lobba, *ibid.*; Sampson (2004).

gang activity. The numbers of murders reduced from 14 to eight between 1997 and 2000, and no murders were gang-related between 1999 and 2000.<sup>183</sup> Whether these were the outcome of that peace treaty has never been definitively proven but is considered to be so by the actors involved.

The 2008 initiative grew out of a long cycle of retaliation murders that began with the killing of Jungle 12 leader Neil Wright in 2005, and the subsequent diffusion of gang dynamics with shifts of loyalties and an increase in the number of gangs. In 2007, the PMI and the August Town Peace Builders organised a peace march through the community, but there was no corresponding reduction in inter-gang homicides. The following year the PMI, the UWI Township Programme, the August Town Peace Builders, and the police came together in an effort to convince the gangs to negotiate a peace agreement. The then-don of Jungle 12 suggested signing a peace treaty in front of TV cameras, which had its intended effect of garnering nationwide attention, as it was the first of its kind in Jamaica, and had the potential to set an example elsewhere.<sup>184</sup> The truce was signed between the corners/gangs of Vietnam,

Goldsmith Villa (before it was divided), River, Jungle 12, and Colour Red in June 2008.

Whether the 2008 truce succeeded in bringing peace to August Town is debatable. Gang-related murders continued, and August Town experienced nine murders in 2009 and another nine in 2010 (Figure 3). The Peace Council meetings did not have regular attendance.<sup>185</sup> Many of the gang members who signed the peace treaty were subsequently murdered in gang warfare.<sup>186</sup> While the peace treaty had tremendous symbolic value, and for years after and to date, many academic papers, international organization reports, and news articles proclaimed its success,<sup>187</sup> a statistical analysis of the effect of the truce concluded that any decline in homicides in August Town after 2008 was part of a larger (local and nationwide) decline in homicides, and could not be traced to the truce.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that the agreements were made suggests that gangs are open to the idea of peace, even if they are not able or willing to live by what they sign their name to.



The UWI's main activities were corner meetings and parenting workshops, and their initiatives included a “Good-People Association Neighbourhood Watch.”

<sup>183</sup> Levy (2001).

<sup>184</sup> Levy (2012); Katz (2010); Jungle 12, *ibid.*; Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; the classification of murders according to motive is not available to the public. Numbers of murders according to motive were provided by the August Town police, and were only available from 2011 on.

<sup>186</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> GOJ (2009), 79. See also Levy (2009).

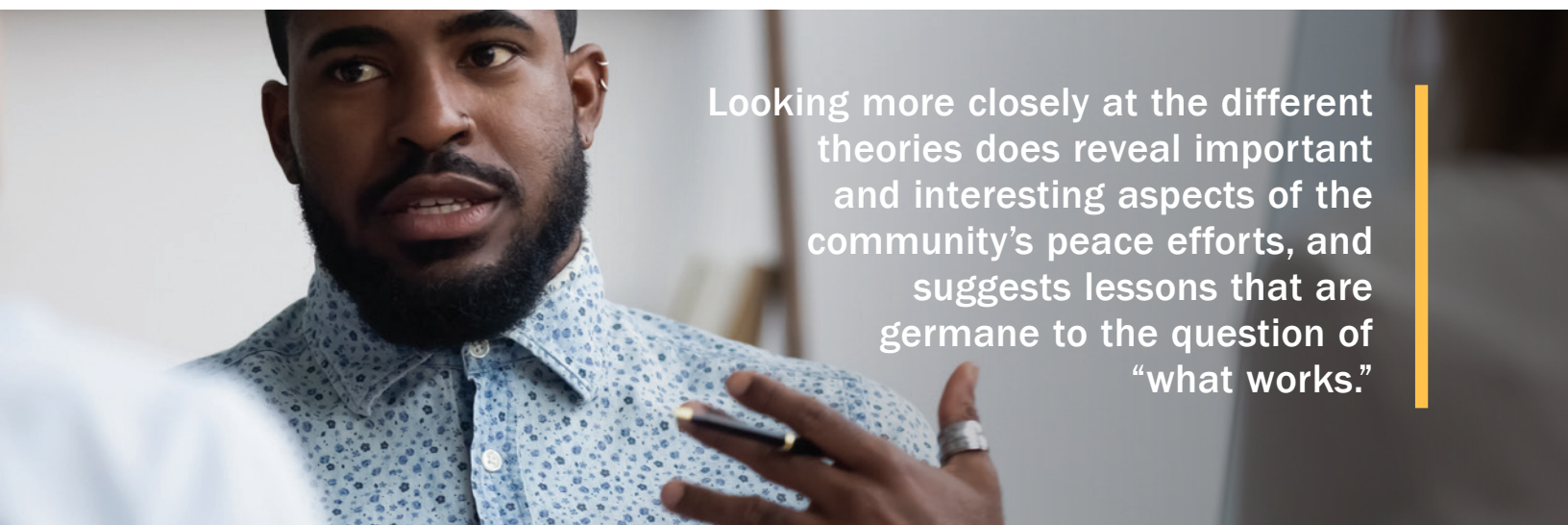
<sup>188</sup> Katz and Amaya, *ibid.* The statistical analysis was a regression analysis that sought to mathematically determine which variables or factors had an impact on the outcome on the murder rate.

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## 3.4 The Year of Zero Murders: 2016

It is not entirely correct to say that there were “zero murders” in 2016—a July 2016 shooting victim died in 2017 and his death was counted for 2017, not 2016. Even at one murder, however, this was a milestone for August Town, and it fueled hope that reducing murder in volatile communities in Jamaica is possible. The dominant theory is that “zero murders” was the outcome of intensive community effort, with and through various anti-violence organizations in community, mainly in the work done in “corner meetings.” This theory is, perhaps obviously, supported by many people who were involved in those efforts—community leaders,

the police, and other community organizations—but is not definitive, nor is it supported by all stakeholders. It would be methodologically difficult to isolate the causal effect on any such outcome given the number of dependent and independent variables involved, and the complexity of the extant and historical context of August Town’s violence problem. Nevertheless, looking more closely at the different theories does reveal important and interesting aspects of the community’s peace efforts, and suggests lessons that are germane to the question of “what works.”



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### The Community Unity and Mediation Hypothesis

The supporting narrative for this explanation generally goes that the year before “zero murders” the Sizzla Youth Foundation, together with the Peace Builders, and then-MP Andre Hylton staged an extensive celebration of the 177th anniversary of August Town’s emancipation with the explicit goal of achieving a “murder-free” year. In preparation they organised corner meetings and sought to involve the whole community in the planning of a month of events culminating on August 31, 2015.<sup>189</sup> Each corner held parties and stage shows, which provided for interaction between the districts; from all accounts this appeared to have a positive effect on gang behaviour, and to have

created a sense of community, as different groups celebrated together and attended each other’s events,<sup>190</sup> where they were able to “relax and fulljoy with no violence.”<sup>191</sup> There were, nevertheless, four homicides in 2015, three of them gang-related.

The murder that was not gang-related was nevertheless significant in the trajectory of events. It appeared to be a robbery of a JUTC bus driver, though nothing was stolen (JUTC is the state-owned public transportation system,) allegedly by two men of Bedward Gardens in late December 2015. It is significant because it is considered to have been the catalyst for a renewed sense of urgency about August

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<sup>189</sup> Hylton, *ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Wilson, *ibid.*; Angella Harris, former CSJP social worker, personal interview, April 16, 2019.

<sup>191</sup> Jungle 12, *ibid.* “Fulljoy” = enjoy.



Town's violence problem, which many people attribute to the "zero murders" the following year.<sup>192</sup> The victim was a person with no known relationship to August Town, who was simply doing his job providing a service to the people of August Town, and this left many citizens in shock; they felt unsafe in their community.<sup>193</sup> The following day, many residents joined a protest march that went through the town.

Subsequently, a number of community stakeholders mobilized with a renewed sense of urgency regarding the violence in the area. August Town Peace Builders members and the then-inspector of police in August Town formed a committee to develop strategies to prevent further violence.<sup>194</sup> Also on the committee were representatives from Mona Social Services, Social Development Commission, the church, and ordinary citizens. They held meetings every Tuesday morning at 8am at the police station to discuss strategies to stop the murders in the community. The member of parliament and the councillor would occasionally attend; they were in full support. The primary goal was to stimulate dialogue between themselves (those who participated in the committee meetings), and the warring gang factions. With many of the major dons and influential/high impact violence producers incarcerated in 2016, ordinary gang members seemed more open to dialogue, and appeared to participate in the discussions.<sup>195</sup> The police inspector even invited some of the remaining dons in the community to the police station in the beginning of 2016 to ask them to remain peaceful and to order their members to do the same.<sup>196</sup> These

## Other Hypotheses

Other than the null hypothesis (that "zero murders" was a fluke), there are two other explanations that have been put forward to understand the events of 2016, both which consider the "community unity-mediation" premise idealistic and incorrect. These explanations do not directly aver that the intervention efforts failed, but that the

meetings lasted for two months.

Corner meetings were then re-introduced. They were organised by the committee and the Sizzla Youth Foundation, and held several times a month "on every corner."<sup>197</sup> Committee members would talk to the corner crews, the corner gangs, and the criminal gangs, with a view to convincing them to solve their conflicts through mediation instead of violence. As was seen with the peace agreements in 1998 and 2008, gangs can be receptive to the concept of peace, and, it would appear, they were in 2016.

To what extent did these groups, their efforts, and the meetings have any bearing on the "zero murders" of 2016? The popular consensus is with the member of parliament's view: "It was the relentless work of the Peace Builders. It was the many meetings with groups to help settle their differences before it got to boiling point. It was the work of the Sizzla Youth Foundation. It was the university, the churches, and the work of the Jamaica Constabulary Force that made it happen."<sup>198</sup> The opposition caretaker at the time agreed: "I give credit for the murder-reduction success in August Town to the work done by members of the community, including reggae artiste Miguel 'Sizzla' Collins, the Peace Management Initiative, the Church, youths on the corner, the business community, and many other stakeholders."<sup>199</sup> The then-inspector of police held a similar view: "A series of decisions were taken by a number of people to make the peace work."<sup>200</sup>

economic and social power of August Town's most active high impact violence producers, and the unassailable illogic of the reprisal killing cycle, are stronger than those forces.

One theory is that there was a diminished presence of the most virulent violent actors in August Town in 2016. At

<sup>192</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; focus group, *ibid.*; Steele, *ibid.*; Wilson, *ibid.*; Taylor, *ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*; Focus group, *ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Romario Scott, "'No Shot Nah Bus!' - Murder-Free 2016 For August Town," *Sunday Gleaner*, January 8, 2017, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20170108/no-shot-nah-bus-murder-free-2016-august-town>.

<sup>199</sup> Andre Hylton, "August Town's war and peace," *Gleaner*, March 19, 2017. (<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/focus/20170319/andre-hylton-august-towns-war-and-peace>).

<sup>200</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*

the end of 2016 through to early 2017, 10 to 13 highly active violence producers were released from prison (some of them out on bail), of which eight to ten were dons, pertaining to as many gangs. Most of these men were alleged murderers. Upon their return to August Town they sought to reclaim their position in the community; this is thought to have been a driving factor behind several post-2016 murders.<sup>201</sup>

Along these lines is the suggestion that in the second half of 2016 would-be/at-risk violent actors were prevented from engaging in violence. These were young men who had been assessed and deemed to be at high or moderate risk of being drawn into gang violence, and who were being aggressively “case managed” by a CSJP community case management officer, working with social workers and psychologists. The one-on-one attention that the young men received—in some cases the social worker was the only adult in their

lives who was not embedded in gang life—and the ongoing follow-ups by the social workers may have played a role in keeping them from engaging in violence.<sup>202</sup> The implication of both proposals is that violence and murder increase in tandem with the presence and activity of high impact violent offenders in the community, and are not necessarily correlated with violence intervention efforts involving mediation or community togetherness.

Another theory that has come to the fore more recently is that “zero murders” was not the outcome of any of the community’s unity and peace efforts or social interventions, but was a deliberate strategy on the part of the violence producers, to further their own interests. In February 2019, Commissioner of Police Antony Anderson stated in a radio interview, *inter alia*:

**There was a year where there no killings in August Town. Everybody claims that it was through their efforts. In that case some of the peace that was established there was at the behest of persons who are violent and criminals. Once that is the case you will have the peace as long as it suits them to carry out criminal activities, boost their own income, probably arm themselves, et cetera. Those are very tenuous arrangements, if you are depending on those to have any sort of lasting peacefulness in the community.<sup>203</sup>**

The Commissioner’s assertion that the peace was a deliberate strategy on the part of gangsters is shared by Venesha Phillips, the councillor for the August Town division and the PNP’s candidate-caretaker, who has worked in August Town at many levels for decades. In that same radio interview, she declared: “This thing where you talk a lot about social work—it is a load of nonsense in circumstances where the guys are given to crime and criminality. You don’t do social interventions when guns are buried in communities, they don’t work; they’ll go for those guns when they feel like it.”<sup>204</sup> A senior police officer for August Town proffered that, with regard to social interventions, “the same players are calling the shots as to who gets what; they are benefitting from what is taking place, and can still disturb the peace at any time.”<sup>205</sup>

These views do not conform to the conventional wisdom on “zero murders,” nor on the value of “soft” approaches to violence interventions, but they are not outside the norm of the state’s view. In 2013 then-Commissioner of Police Owen Ellington’s testimony to a parliamentary joint select committee stated: “organized crime is not socially produced crime. Social intervention will not control organized crime. Only tough law enforcement and long term incapacitation can.”<sup>206</sup> But these views betray a sentiment that goes beyond the then-Commissioner’s statement: these important and influential stakeholders are suggesting that not only are social interventions ineffective, but that they strengthen the hand of the very gangsters whose influence they are intended to subvert.

<sup>201</sup> Key stakeholder, *ibid.*; Taylor, *ibid.* Due to ongoing investigations, the police cannot state for the record nor can they determine exactly how many or which murders are due to the criminals’ return.

<sup>202</sup> Angella Harris, *ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> “Nationwide News at 5,” Nationwide 90.3 FM, Jamaica, February 20, 2019.

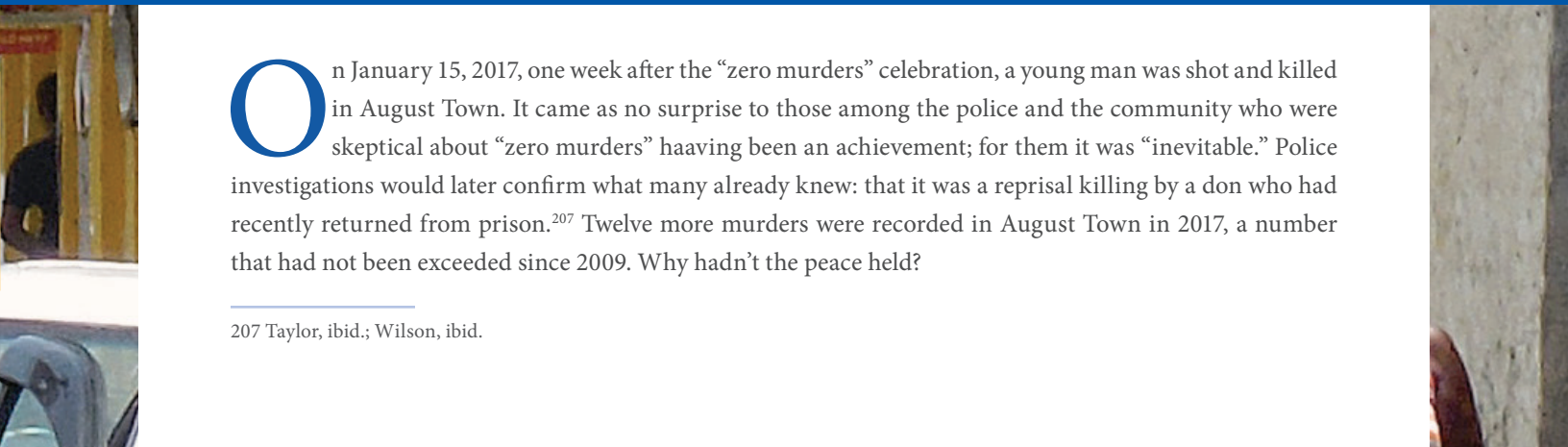
<sup>204</sup> Abka Fitz-Henley, “August Town Tense After More Gun Fighting,” Evening News, Nationwide 90.3FM, February 20, 2019, <http://nationwideradiojm.com/august-town-tense-after-more-gun-fighting/>. The six murders do not include those of two men whose bodies were found floating in the Dallas River, which runs near August Town, and whose abandoned car was found in August Town in January; up to May 9, 2019 there had been 10 murders in August Town.

<sup>205</sup> Inspector Michael Trail, Sub-Officer, August Town Police Station, personal communication, May 22, 2019.

<sup>206</sup> “Submission of the Commissioner of Police to the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to consider and report on the Bill entitled ‘The Criminal Justice (Suppression of Criminal Organizations) Act 2013,’” August 23, 2013, quoted in Joy Moncrieffe, “Study of the Effects of the Law Reform (Fraudulent Transactions) (Special Provisions) Act 2013 (Lotto Scam Law) and the Criminal Justice (Suppression of Organisations) Act 2014 on the Rates of Murder and Organised Crime in Western Jamaica,” Ministry of National Security, 2017.



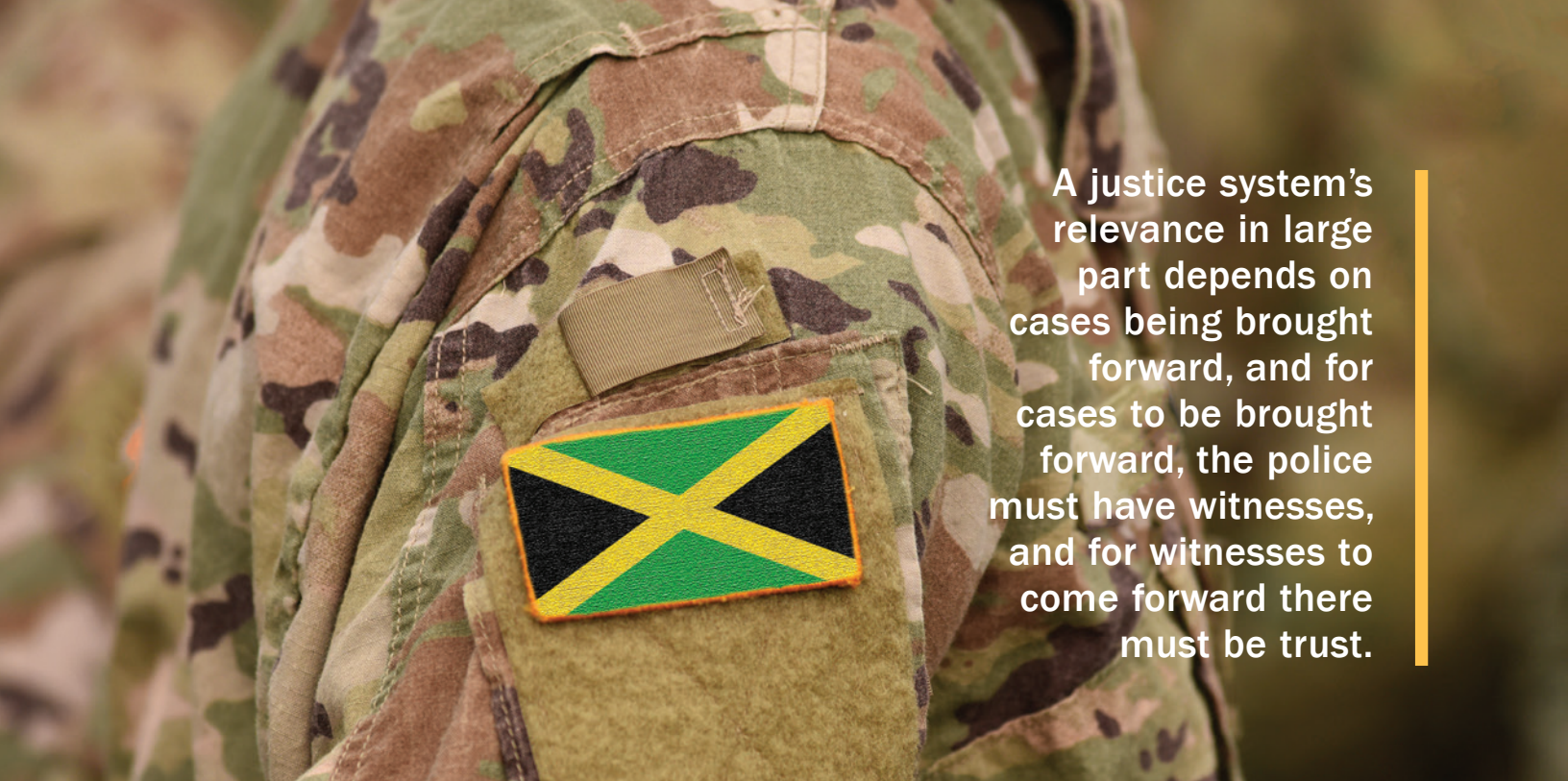
## 4. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM “ZERO MURDERS” IN AUGUST TOWN?



**O**n January 15, 2017, one week after the “zero murders” celebration, a young man was shot and killed in August Town. It came as no surprise to those among the police and the community who were skeptical about “zero murders” having been an achievement; for them it was “inevitable.” Police investigations would later confirm what many already knew: that it was a reprisal killing by a don who had recently returned from prison.<sup>207</sup> Twelve more murders were recorded in August Town in 2017, a number that had not been exceeded since 2009. Why hadn’t the peace held?

<sup>207</sup> Taylor, *ibid.*; Wilson, *ibid.*





A justice system's relevance in large part depends on cases being brought forward, and for cases to be brought forward, the police must have witnesses, and for witnesses to come forward there must be trust.

There is no definitive answer to how August Town arrived at “zero murders” in 2016. The view of many of August Town’s community leaders and citizens—that “zero murders” was the outcome of the work of a community desperate for peace, together with concerted social intervention attempts, particularly mediation—is rivaled by hypotheses that imply that the interventions did not have any significant effect on the existence and activities of highly active violent gangs, nor on violence as a social norm. To draw definitive conclusions would entail a methodology and data that are beyond the scope of this study.

But there are important elements that emerge from all the hypotheses explaining “zero murders,” elements that should inform policies regarding violence interventions in the many volatile communities in Jamaica:

State security actors are important, even if they are not efficacious. If the criminal justice system worked efficiently to identify, prosecute, and convict violent offenders, interventions whereby non-state actors seek to directly modify violent perpetrators’ behavior, would not be necessary.<sup>208</sup> This emphasis on interventions does not suggest that the justice system, nor the police, are moot. Nor should it be interpreted as advocating that August Town—or any community with such violence problems—depend on solutions outside of the state; and it is not a

recommendation to continue to hybridize the state. A justice system’s relevance in large part depends on cases being brought forward, and for cases to be brought forward, the police must have witnesses, and for witnesses to come forward there must be trust. The August Town police should be supported in their efforts, whether community policing or otherwise, to build citizens’ trust in them.

The police force’s relevance depends not only on its ability to bring cases forward, but also to effectively prevent and control violence in the moment, “actual” policing. The August Town police—as obtains with their counterparts in many communities across the island—are not adequately equipped to properly patrol the area.

The principal driver of murder in August Town is extreme violence carried out by a few high impact offenders (gang leaders and gang members) according to a quest for power, and an unending and unpredictable cycle of revenge. Violence abates when virulent violence producers are incarcerated or otherwise unable to exercise power and control. Clearing violent actors from the community—fairly and humanely—has to be a priority for any intervention strategy. (August Town’s violence problem is no longer related to politics, and the high impact violent perpetrators operate independently of politics and politicians.)

<sup>208</sup> Cano and Rojido, 33.

Rehabilitation and re-integration of virulent violent offenders has failed, given the apparent correlation between the release of high impact violence producers and the return of violence to August Town in early 2017. The promise of restorative justice was never given a chance to be tested because of the logistical problems that forced the Restorative Justice Centre to close before it had done much.

The relationship between August Town's overseas gang affiliates and what happens on the ground in Jamaica is crucial and needs to be better understood, together with Jamaica's bilateral security partners, with a view to intercepting and interrupting the flow of money, weapons, and influence.

Given the available evidence, in general, the plethora of interventions over the past two decades, whether formal or informal, directly or indirectly targeting violence reduction, has not had a sustained impact on the violence in August Town, as measured by the murder rate over the years, nor have social and economic conditions improved.

There is a systemic weakness as regards sustainability and consistency of anti-violence/violence reduction interventions. Most of the interventions, whether formal or informal, whether internal or external, were not consistent and most of them ended, usually due to resource constraints of one sort or another. Even in the absence of evaluations, no intervention attempting to end or reduce violence that has such a long history and is so deeply embedded in a community, has a chance of success if it is not carried out for a reasonable period of time. August Town's violence problem began half a century ago; a three-year project can hardly be expected to make much of a dent in it.

The collective efficacy of August Town's citizens has been the most sustained driver of anti-violence initiatives throughout the two decades of such efforts, including the 2015-16 efforts.<sup>209</sup> Collective efficacy, when strong, has been found to directly predict lower rates of violence.<sup>210</sup> Similar interventions elsewhere, that have been rigorously evaluated, provide a substantial body of evidence that shows that similar approaches of communities coming together, united against violence, and working with the police and social service providers, create collective accountability and foster internal social pressure that deters violence.<sup>211</sup>

Mediation as it relates to truces between gangs has, at least in the short term, reduced violence. Though empirical evidence is limited, mediation has been shown in other countries to sometimes generate a very sharp positive return in the short term, though the medium to long-term results are uncertain.<sup>212</sup> Having seen that mediation between August Town's warring gangs led to the truces and peace agreements of 1998 and 2008, but both times the peace was not sustained, it is thus quite possible that the mediation efforts vis-à-vis the corner meetings in 2016 did have an impact on reducing violence in August Town in that year, but that, again, the impact was short-lived, hence the immediate return to the usual violence and murder patterns in 2017 and thereafter. If mediation is to work, it has to be ongoing. Those who believe it was the corner meetings that brought about "zero murders" explain the immediate resurgence of violence in 2017 as "people dropped their hands," and grew complacent: "After the end of 2016 everybody started to relax, because of the celebration of 'zero murders'. We automatically believed that the peace of 2016 would flow into 2017. So, we gave people a loophole to commit these [murders], so now they catch up with their reprisal murders."<sup>213</sup>

**Those who believe it was the corner meetings that brought about "zero murders" explain the immediate resurgence of violence in 2017 as "people dropped their hands," and grew complacent.**

<sup>209</sup> Collective efficacy is the process of activating or converting social ties among neighborhood residents in order to achieve collective goals, such as public order or the control of crime. (Sampson, 2004)

<sup>210</sup> Sampson (2004), 108.

<sup>211</sup> National Network for Safe Communities, *Group Violence Intervention: An Implementation Guide*, Washington, DC: U.S Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2013, [https://nnscommunities.org/uploads/GVI\\_Guide\\_2016.pdf](https://nnscommunities.org/uploads/GVI_Guide_2016.pdf).

<sup>212</sup> Instinto de Vida, "Latin America can reduce homicide by 50 percent in 10 years," Igarape Institute, Brazil, July 2017, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/11-08-2017-Campanha-Instinto-de-Vida-EN.pdf>, 9.

<sup>213</sup> Taylor, *ibid*.

Mediation, however, comes with risks,<sup>214</sup> and in Jamaica it has come to be viewed with suspicion by some important decision-makers. The fact that significant key stakeholders place no value on mediation as a contributor to “zero murders” is but one indication of their regard, and public statements about mediation in general are similarly dismissive. There is research that has suggested that mediation can actually strengthen the power of virulent violent and criminal actors.<sup>215</sup> There needs to be a consensus among all anti-violence stakeholders—NGOs and CBOs, the police, security policy decision makers, and non-police state actors—on mediation and how it is used as an anti-violence intervention. The PMI’s relationship with the state is “profoundly ambivalent,”<sup>216</sup> given its (PMI’s) origins and main funding as a state entity mandated to reduce violence by non-conventional means, but those non-conventional means are under-resourced and overtly devalued by other state actors. Such a significant violence intervention tool should not be complicated by such profound ambivalence.

The apparent suspicion towards mediation on the part of some key stakeholders seems to extend to other “soft” or social interventions, involving violence producers and powerful gangsters. As with mediation, conflicting views among key stakeholders about intervention strategies are destined to undermine those interventions as they will not be adequately supported to have any prospect of succeeding. Consensus is also essential so that efforts can be better coordinated across the various stakeholders and actors, such as various ministries and state agencies, funders, and implementers, whether governmental or non-governmental.

Violence interruption—where individual vulnerable youth who are prospective violence producers are directly engaged—appears to have an effect on preventing would-be violent offenders from acting. A qualitative evaluation of CSJP Violence Interrupters in violence-plagued areas of St. James suggested that they are effective in curtailing

violence, and that approach may have been a factor in 2016 in August Town.

None of the interventions in August Town, whether directly intended to prevent/end violence, or indirectly aimed at violence by attempting to improve social and/or economic conditions, have been rigorously measured to determine their effectiveness in achieving their goals. While there is a robust culture in Jamaica of doing intervention-type projects, there are challenges regarding monitoring and evaluation from the inception stage of project and intervention design; there is some monitoring, but evaluation is a weak link.<sup>217</sup>

There is an inherent danger in conducting untested and unevaluated interventions. Many behavioural interventions are widely implemented without being adequately tested because they seem to make obvious sense that they will work; unfortunately, often when these interventions are tested with randomized control trials (a type of rigorous scientific evaluation) many have been found to be ineffective or even cause harm.<sup>218</sup> Jamaica does not have an evaluation culture; evidence-based programming in areas such as violence interventions is not standard procedure.<sup>219</sup>

That said, lack of evidence in violence prevention interventions is not a new issue, not in Jamaica, nor in many other countries around the world. A 2010 World Health Organization report found: “There is a lack of evidence from middle- and, in particular, low-income countries, on preventing armed and other violence, despite the fact that they suffer disproportionate levels of both. This issue needs to be urgently addressed by enhancing routine monitoring, research, and evaluation capacity.”<sup>220</sup> While there are growing numbers of positive examples of violence reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean, there is only limited evidence in terms of what works. A 2013 study reviewed more than 1,300 citizen security programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean and determined that

<sup>214</sup> Cano and Rojido, 26.

<sup>215</sup> Sabrin Kassam, “Mediation Perspectives: Dealing with Organized Crime,” The CSS Blog Network, Center for Security Studies, Zurich, January 30, 2015, <https://isnblog.ethz.ch/security/mediation-perspectives-dealing-with-organized-crime>.

<sup>216</sup> Cano and Rojido, 120.

<sup>217</sup> Monitoring and evaluation personnel from the Ministry of National Security Citizen Security and Justice Programme, interview with authors, April 17, 2019.

<sup>218</sup> Timothy D. Wilson & Lindsay P. Juarez, “Intuition is not evidence: Prescriptions for behavioral interventions from social psychology,” *Behavioral Science & Policy* 1 (1), Spring 2015, [https://issuu.com/behavioralsciencepolicyassociation/docs/bsp\\_vol1is1\\_wilson\\_384f033534b21e](https://issuu.com/behavioralsciencepolicyassociation/docs/bsp_vol1is1_wilson_384f033534b21e)

<sup>219</sup> CSJP personnel from the Ministry of National Security Citizen Security and Justice Programme, interview with authors, April 17, 2019.

<sup>220</sup> Mark A Bellis, Lisa Jones, Karen Hughes, and Sara Hughes, “Preventing and Reducing Armed Violence: What Works?” (Background Paper Oslo Conference on Armed Violence), Liverpool John Moores University, Centre for Public Health, the World Health Organization Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, and the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, April 2010, [www.poa-iss.org/KIT/2010\\_What-works.pdf](http://www.poa-iss.org/KIT/2010_What-works.pdf).

Jamaica must not continue to pursue social interventions, whether pertaining to anti-violence or to any other behaviour change initiative, that are not supported by empirical evidence, and that are not evaluated by systematic measures that are built into the intervention design at inception.



only 7 percent conducted a robust evaluation.<sup>221</sup> Of nine Latin American and Caribbean countries that had violence interruption programmes similar to PMI's, none had impact evaluations.<sup>222</sup>

From a methodological standpoint, these types of projects are hard to evaluate in light of various factors including the broad nature of their interventions and the concurrence of several projects and incidents in any given community. A 2009 evaluation of 10 citizen security interventions in Jamaica attempted to see if there was any correlation between the implementation of community security programmes and levels of reported crimes and violence-related injuries, using JCF crime statistics and hospital data, but, among other methodological hurdles, challenges with the police

data meant it was impossible to draw direct correlations between programme implementation and crime levels, and further, even if crime figures were accurate, an increase or reduction in crime could not be automatically attributed to the interventions.<sup>223</sup>

Jamaica must not continue to pursue social interventions, whether pertaining to anti-violence or to any other behaviour change initiative, that are not supported by empirical evidence, and that are not evaluated by systematic measures that are built into the intervention design at inception. Aside from the risk of the intervention being useless, or worse, causing harm, there are financial costs and opportunity costs that Jamaica can ill afford.



## 4.1 Conclusions

Since the 1990s, when the dynamics of lethal violence shifted from politics to crime, revenge, and power-seeking, August Town's citizens have desired and worked for peace in their community. Over the past two decades, dozens of state and non-state actors also became active in this area and initiated several violence-reduction/ intervention programmes. These programmes, whether external or internal, have not been sustained. In the absence of consistent, quantitative

programme impact evaluations, there is no way of truly knowing what effects they have had, whether positive or negative, or if they have had any effect at all. Broadly speaking, there is no quantifiable evidence of any of these interventions having had any effect on the social, economic, and violence indicators for the community, which remain unchanged.

<sup>221</sup> Instinto de Vida, "Latin America can reduce homicide by 50 percent in 10 years," Igarape Institute, Brazil, July 2017, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/11-08-2017-Campanha-Instinto-de-Vida-EN.pdf>, 8.

<sup>222</sup> Cano and Rojido, 35.

<sup>223</sup> McLean and Blake Lobba, 74.



With specific regard to the “zero murders” in 2016 in August Town, even in the absence of rigorous evidence, one can justifiably proffer that if it is that the community’s anti-violence efforts played a role, those efforts generally do not have long lasting effects, and they were not sustained, hence the results were short-lived. At the same time, it is logical to conclude that “zero murders” occurred in August Town in 2016 because some of the most lethal violence producers were not in the community carrying out their regular homicidal activity. It is also possible that both factors—the intensive efforts at mediation and community unity, and the temporary absence of high impact violent actors—resulted in increased traction of the mediation efforts with “junior” violence producers, who may have been more approachable and more easily convinced to hold back from violent action. The third theory, that influential gangsters deliberately held back on violent activity in order to suit their own personal commercial and criminal interests, has not been thoroughly probed, but is nevertheless an important signal as to the

value that key state decisionmakers place on mediation and violence interruption as effective strategies.

Jamaica is not going to solve its violence problem overnight, but the country will continue to spin its wheels and progress slowly, if at all, unless a more coherent (in terms of bringing together all the relevant ministries and agencies to work in a coordinated manner) approach is adopted. For any such approach to succeed it must be insulated from partisan politics, and so not be subject to the political cycle and changes in administration. Importantly, the approach and any interventions within it must be based on evidence-supported programmes that are implemented carefully and with a view to long term sustainability. This is a matter of fiscal responsibility, given the enormous sums of money that the government and donors spend on anti-violence efforts, as much as it is crucial to actually having a measurable and positive effect on the problem.

## 4.2 Recommendations

Reducing extreme violence as it is perpetrated by high impact violence producers should be the primary and direct objective of any intervention in August Town.

### Law Enforcement

**1** Focus on continuing to build the relationship between the police and the community towards engendering greater trust. The police’s efforts to build citizens’ trust should be continued and strengthened through continuous implementation of community policing elements, with a view to witnesses coming forward to give evidence to build cases. Everyday policing should be service-oriented, so citizens feel protected and are more likely to report and give evidence. What might have seemed like an obvious recommendation—to remove the most virulent and high impact violence producers from the community—can only be done humanely and justicially if the police have the evidence to build cases against them. The police need more resources and vehicles to better serve the community.

**2** Together with Jamaica’s bilateral security partners, research and better understand the relationship between the overseas gang affiliates and the activities on the ground in August Town, with a view to severing or at least disrupting the flows of information, orders, money, and weapons between the United States and Jamaica.

### Mediation and Restorative Justice

**3** The Ministry of National Security as the primary state agency responsible for citizen security and public safety, should convene all stakeholders, from every relevant level of the state security apparatus, and the relevant leaders, NGOs, and CBOs in Jamaica’s violence ridden communities, to form a consensus on mediation, and on other key intervention strategies. Most August Town stakeholders and community members perceive that mediation “works,” and their buy-in and participation in any violence reduction effort is crucial. A dialogue should be initiated with the key state security



stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the value and efficacy of mediation, so as to remove any ambivalence that may surround the state's support for mediation as a violence reduction intervention, and structure mediation interventions accordingly. Evidence-based mediation methods should be introduced and implemented to strengthen existing mediation approaches, and mediation interventions should be measured to rigorously test outcomes.

- 4** Prioritise restorative justice as a means of reintegrating ex-offenders who have returned to the community. This would require adequately equipping the restorative justice centre in August Town, and implementing and supporting the proposed restorative justice programme, in full. Restorative justice is a promising violence intervention method that has been proven effective in violent contexts very similar to August Town. Establish clear evaluation protocols from the outset of any such initiative.

## Interventions

- 5** Violence reduction/prevention interventions should work with existing programmes and organisations in the community and should prioritize sustainability and continuity. Building on existing collective citizen efficacy, local organizations should be supported with capacity building, governance training, leadership training, and succession planning, and new community-based organizations and leaders should to be identified and supported. Any such support/intervention must factor in the trust deficit in the community.
- 6** Social Intervention programmes must have built in transparent, systematic, evidence-informed programme evaluations. Any further interventions, of any sort, must have built-in, transparent, and rigorous evaluation mechanisms. Interventions should establish baseline measures of whatever indicators they intend to change, against which the work can be evaluated, and, ideally, include control groups.

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# APPENDIX I

## Questionnaire Survey

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am part of a research team conducting a survey for the Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI).

We are doing a survey of community residents to (i) assess the range of community development initiatives and programmes that were implemented to curtail crime in August Town to determine what really worked and led to the result of zero murders in 2016.

I would like to assure you that all answers you give are strictly confidential. Your name will not be recorded on the questionnaire and your responses will not be used in any way that could identify who you are. Also, this survey is completely voluntary. If you do not want to answer any questions, please tell me and I will move on to the next one. If you understand what I have just said and agree to do this interview, do you have any questions before we begin?

### August Town Districts:

- Bedward Gardens       African Gardens       Greater August Town  
 Goldsmith Villa       Hermitage

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

### A1. INTERVIEWER: Record the respondent's sex

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

### A2. How old were you on your last birthday

- 1) 16–25 years
- 2) 26–35 years
- 3) 36–45 years
- 4) 46–55 years
- 5) 56–65 years
- 6) 66 years & over

### A3. What is your current marital/union status?

- 1) Married
- 2) Separated
- 3) Divorced
- 4) Widowed
- 5) Common-law
- 6) Single – Never Married
- 7) Visiting relationship
- 8) Other (specify)
- 99) Refused (Can you change this 99 coding or is it standard?)

### A4. What is the highest level of education that you have attained?

- 1) No formal schooling
- 2) Some Primary School
- 3) Completed Primary School
- 4) Some Secondary School
- 5) Completed Secondary School
- 6) Some College
- 7) College Diploma/Certificate
- 8) Some University
- 9) University Degree
- 10) Vocational
- 11) Other (specify)
- 99) Refused

### A5. What were you mostly doing in the past year?

- 1) Working full-time
- 2) Working part-time
- 3) Self-employed full-time
- 4) Self-employed part-time
- 5) Unemployed – looking for work
- 6) Unemployed – not looking for work
- 7) Disabled – unable to work
- 8) Student (full-time)
- 9) Student (part-time)
- 10) Student & Working full time
- 11) Student & Working part-time
- 12) Hustling
- 13) Homemaker (housewife)
- 14) Retired
- 15) Other (specify)
- 99) Refused

**A6. What would you estimate is the net monthly income of your household?**

- 1) \$0 to \$30,000
- 2) \$30,001 - \$60,000
- 3) \$60,001 - \$100,000
- 4) \$100,001 or more
- 88) Don't know
- 99) Refused

**SECTION B: CITIZEN SECURITY AND JUSTICE PROGRAMME (CSJP)**

**B1. Which of the following Crime intervention Programmes do you believe contributed most significantly to '0' murders in August Town for 2016**

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE SELECT ONLY ONE

- A) Dispute Resolution
- B) Mentoring of youth especially males
- C) Job. Skills Training
- D) Remedial Education (reading and numeracy)
- E) Parenting
- F) Promotion of safety in the community
- G) Promotion of unity in the community
- H) Establishment of the Community Development Council (CDC)

**B2. Do you think the CSJP is doing a good job, an average job or a poor job of providing appropriate social intervention initiatives to your community?**

- 1) A good job
- 2) An average job
- 3) A poor job
- 88) Don't know
- 99) Refused



## SECTION C: PEACE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

**C1. Tell us which of the following Peace Management Initiative Programmes you are satisfied have contributed to the '0' murders in 2016**

**INTERVIEWER: PLEASE CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY**

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
a) Signing of Peace Treaty 2008	1	2	3	4	5
b) Upgrading of Basic Schools (jointly with UWI Township)	1	2	3	4	5
c) Corner meetings	1	2	3	4	5
d) Tutoring up to CSEC level (jointly with UWI Township)	1	2	3	4	5
e) Enrollment of Youth in HEART Skills Training Programmes	1	2	3	4	5
f) Counselling	1	2	3	4	5
g) Conflict Resolution	1	2	3	4	5
h) Restorative Justice (lodgings and income generation))	1	2	3	4	5
i) UWI Township Programme (Scholarships Programme to UWI)	1	2	3	4	5
j) UWI Township Programme - (Parenting)	1	2	3	4	5
k) UWI Township Programme (Mentoring)	1	2	3	4	5
l) Church Outreach Programmes	1	2	3	4	5
m) African Gardens Land Development & Associates' Annual August Town Arise Expo	1	2	3	4	5

## C2. How important are the Community-based Organisations named below to crime reduction?

	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant	Don't know	Refused
a) August Town CDC	1	2	3	4	5
b) August Town Sports Development Foundation	1	2	3	4	5
c) Peace Builders	1	2	3	4	5
d) Police Youth Club	1	2	3	4	5
e) Sizzla Youth Foundation	1	2	3	4	5
f) August Town Parenting Group	1	2	3	4	5
g) August Town Principal's Association	1	2	3	4	5
h) August Town Primary School PTA	1	2	3	4	5
i) UWI Township Programme	1	2	3	4	5
j) Churches	1	2	3	4	5

## SECTION D: LOCAL COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES INCLUSIVE

**D1. Tell us which of the following Community Based Intervention Programmes you are satisfied have contributed to the '0' murders in 2016**

**INTERVIEWER: PLEASE CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY**

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
a) August Town Sports Development Foundation (Football)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Peace Builders Group -Corner meetings & Dialogue	1	2	3	4	5
c) Sizzla Youth Foundation – (Annual Emancipation Celebrations, Football & Netball)	1	2	3	4	5
d) Police Youth Club	1	2	3	4	5
e) UWI Township Programme – (Upgrade of Basic Schools& their teachers)	1	2	3	4	5
f) UWI Township Programme – Skills Training	1	2	3	4	5
G) UWI Township Programme – (Bringing Jamaica Natl. for development of student	1	2	3	4	5

## SECTION E: CONFIDENCE IN POLICE

### E1. Do you think the police are doing a good job, an average job or a poor job in your community in the following areas?

	Good job	An average job	A poor job	Don't know	Refused
a) Enforcing the law	1	2	3	88	99
b) Responding quickly when called	1	2	3	88	99
c) Ensuring the safety of people	1	2	3	88	99
d) Managing criminal gangs	1	2	3	88	99
e) Preventing police brutality	1	2	3	88	99
f) Preventing corruption and crime among their own officers	1	2	3	88	99
g) Keeping information given by the public confidential	1	2	3	88	99

### E2. Overall, how satisfied are you with the performance of the police in your community?

- |                                       |                      |             |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 1) Very satisfied                     | 4) Dissatisfied      | 99) Refused |
| 2) Satisfied                          | 5) Very dissatisfied |             |
| 3) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 88) Don't know       |             |

### E3. What is your level of agreement with this statement: "The police play a significant role in the reduction of crime in my community"

- |                                       |                      |             |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 1) Very satisfied                     | 4) Dissatisfied      | 99) Refused |
| 2) Satisfied                          | 5) Very dissatisfied |             |
| 3) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 88) Don't know       |             |

## SECTION F: COMMUNITY SAFETY

### F1. What is your level of agreement with this statement: "My community is a safe place to live"

- |                                       |                      |             |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 1) Very satisfied                     | 4) Dissatisfied      | 99) Refused |
| 2) Satisfied                          | 5) Very dissatisfied |             |
| 3) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 88) Don't know       |             |

# APPENDIX II

## Citizen Focus Group Questions

1. Do the police make you feel safe in your community? If so, how?

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2. How do you think your local politicians help build safety in your community?

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3. Who do you consider, ultimately, to be responsible for ensuring safety in your community?

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4. What do you or the people around you do to build safety in your community?

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5. What do you think would happen if there were no gangs in August Town?

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6. What do you think made the zero murders in 2016 possible?

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# NOTES

# NOTES



# **ZERO MURDERS:**

## **SEARCHING FOR LESSONS FROM TWO DECADES OF ANTI-VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS IN AUGUST TOWN**



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