Intervention Framework for Prevention in Public Schools

Strengthening Safe Spaces: Accompanying Basic Education in Unsafe Contexts
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Dubai Cares: Dubai Cares is a UAE-based global philanthropic organization that works towards providing children and youth in developing countries with access to quality education. Since its inception in 2007, the organization has successfully launched education programs reaching over 20 million beneficiaries in 60 developing countries. Dubai Cares also plays a key role in helping achieve the UN SDG4 on quality education. To learn more, please visit www.dubaicares.ae

E-Cubed: The Evidence for Education in Emergencies (E-Cubed) Research Fund aims to strengthen the evidence base in EiE, by supporting contextually relevant and usable research, and disseminating global public goods. Dubai Cares partnered with INEE in 2017 to design and manage this research fund. To learn more, please visit https://inee.org/evidence/e-cubed

INEE: The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is an open, global network of members working together within a humanitarian and development framework to ensure that all individuals have the right to a quality, safe, relevant, and equitable education. INEE’s work is founded on the fundamental right to education. To learn more, please visit https://inee.org/
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The research project “Teachers, Schools and Communities: Strengthening Safe Spaces” focuses on the social dynamics of schools and communities in contexts of gang presence and insecurity in El Salvador. This is the fourth phase of the research program Education in Risk and Conflict Situations, carried out from 2017 to 2022 by the Master’s in Education Policy and Evaluation at the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (UCA), El Salvador. The ESRC program situates itself in the field of Education in Emergencies, that addresses the challenges of providing educational services in multiple contexts of crisis and emergencies. This program seeks to understand the transformations in relations, interactions and functions that teachers and schools daily confront when there is insecurity and gang presence in school surroundings.

The general objective of the “Teachers, Schools and Communities” project is to understand how local social relations and dynamics can facilitate a positive school environment and quality education in adverse contexts. Likewise, an intervention framework is proposed to strengthen prevention initiatives through the incorporation of local stakeholders, relationships and dynamics in the design and implementation process. This publication presents the intervention framework, one of the main results of the “Teachers, Schools and Communities” project.

The first part, called “Foundations and Approaches”, briefly explains the complexities of school prevention and the foundations of the intervention framework. The second part presents the “Context-Actions-Relations” intervention framework, which is based on the general cycle of a project and the three pillars: Contextualization, Participatory Actions and Social Relations. The purpose is, through academic research, to contribute to the prevention of insecurity in schools based on evidence.
Introduction

The research project, Teachers, Schools and Communities: Strengthening Secure Spaces, addresses social dynamics of schools and communities in local contexts of gang presence and insecurity in El Salvador. When insecurity —for instance, gang-related conflicts, threats of violence, or extortion— prevent youth from attending school or schools from developing the curriculum, a silent emergency develops. Important life, social and employment skills are not learned, while poverty, exclusion and insecurity are reproduced. This project responds to the need to understand how local social dynamics and relationships can strengthen school policies or educational interventions to prevent these situations from getting out of control and making the school an insecure place.

The Salvadoran Ministry of Education identifies the following risk factors that affect the security of public schools: gangs, theft, drugs, carrying of firearms or knives, extortion, sexual exploitation, violations, human trafficking, threats against students, alcoholism and bullying. It also explicitly mentions teachers being threatened or extorted. Some schools receive support from externally-sponsored prevention programs while others are left to their own ingenuity, using their experiences and limited means to confront the challenges.

As a contribution to the field of Education in Emergencies, this study is not oriented at evaluating specific school policies or external prevention projects, nor aims to find out which specific practices seem to work in insecure contexts. Rather, it seeks to understand what makes prevention work and develop a framework to help the design and implementation of school-based prevention to address insecurity and gang presence. The project is part of a broader research program, Education in Risk and Conflict Situations (ERCS), which provides input for educational policies that strengthen the daily functioning of schools, the pedagogical relationships with students, the relationships between schools and the local community, and the integration of students in the education system.

Objective & Research Question

The purpose of this project is to understand how local social relations and dynamics facilitate positive school environments and education in adverse contexts, and to develop an intervention framework for strengthening prevention initiatives through
incorporating these dynamics in design and implementation processes. The study focuses on identifying local social processes that encompass the relationships between teachers and students, the cohesion among school staff, and the involvement of the local community.

To this end, the research question is: How can pedagogical relationships and local social dynamics in the school setting facilitate the achieving or maintaining of a positive school environment and quality education in contexts of gang presence and insecurity? This question inquires how community involvement, and the support of external organizations can aid the principal and the teachers in preventing or overcoming conflicts, threats or confrontations, and the accompanying anxiety and fear, inside and outside the school.

**Methodology**

The study of schools in insecure areas with gang presence requires a methodology that permits deepening understanding and generating reliable data while guaranteeing personal security for informants and researchers. A case study design was chosen consisting of in-depth interviews with multiple actors in every case. The research objective was not to produce statistical generalizations, rather to produce a deeper understanding of how local social relations and dynamics in the school setting facilitate the achieving or maintaining of a positive school environment and quality education. An online survey was included because of the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and also a series of workshops to discuss and deepen the information obtained by the survey and interviews. A total of 512 teachers from 61 schools participated in the survey, eight schools participated in the case studies —totaling 51 semi-structured interviews— and seven schools participated in the final workshop.

**The Complexities of School-Based Prevention**

The public schools that participated in this study function in environments marked by insecurity, often attributed to gang presence. Teachers mention the existence of, among others, theft, assault, extorsion, drug trade, threats, and even murder. Schools also struggle to confront diverse situations of tension and conflict internally, with differing degrees of success. External support comes in different shapes and sizes, although not for all public schools.

Often schools enjoy frequent appearances of the police to control situations of insecurity in and around the school premises. In some schools, the police also offer sport and artistic activities, and officers teach social skills and awareness of the consequences of gang involvement. Some teachers see police presence as beneficial and as a form of prevention. Nonetheless, others sustain that this is not sufficient for reducing insecurity, and that new forms of social coexistence within the school and the community must be fostered.
If there is security in the community, you feel secure in the school”.

Teacher

Yes, the presence of the police causes fear. Because if someone, for instance a kid related to the gang, observes that we are talking to the police or to soldiers, he might think that we called them. That is dangerous, very dangerous”.

Vice-principal

We as teachers are only transformers of the behavior that the students bring from their families”.

Teacher

For the school, essential external relationships begin with the family and extend to the broader community. Teachers recognize them as key, even though these relationships are occasionally tense or distant. School-family dynamics were altered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of remote learning. As families took on more educational responsibilities, on-line and hybrid teaching and learning modalities provided a means —principally WhatsApp groups— to communicate more directly and frequently with teachers. In some cases, however, the relationship became even more distant, even to the point that students abandoned their studies. In the community relationships, churches take on an important role. Teachers express that those students and families associated with a church are more likely to avoid violent acts and demonstrate better student behavior.

Public school teachers often have long career trajectories and express that they have little need for special educational strategies or interventions. In the context of few available resources, they focus on maintaining good relationships, but even so, gang presence in the neighboring area adds another layer of strain to an already complex job. Although, gang members often do not attend school and teachers even assert that gang-involved students behave themselves and do not call attention to themselves in the classroom, students can have different kinds of contact with the gang. Schools usually have students that are related to gangs through family members or friends who belong to a gang. Typically, in the school, internal relationships are affected when these gang-related students question the teachers’ authority. Feeling that these relatives protect them, these youth show defiant behavior in the classroom and reject the norms established by the teacher and school. The threat of gang members getting involved mean teachers become afraid of escalating the conflict.
You do not need much to do something”.

Community actor

Our context is not so extremely violent, but yes, we take note of one or another student who causes anxiety or a sense of insecurity in our staff”.

Principal

All of us have to be focused on that if I treat a student well, the student will respond in the same way. But if I treat a student badly, the student will react badly or worse”.

Vice-principal

Teaching methods have evolved in the face of potential threats by gang-related students. Teachers often abandon the more punitive or coercive, traditional authoritarian methods to enforce rules in the classroom. However, this change to more positive disciplinary methods is not always a voluntary choice or part of the professional development of teachers; rather it is a manifestation of a redistribution of power that occurs within classrooms with gang-related youth. Nonetheless, apart from their academic role, teachers take on other roles, —including ones pertaining more to the realm of the family, such as advisor, parent, counselor, etc.— to help students and to avert that they get into trouble. The attention and caring of teachers have essential preventive qualities for students that are not necessarily linked to gangs, but are vulnerable and at-risk due to diverse situations, such as dysfunctional homes, domestic violence, economic difficulties, as well as subject to gang presence in their communities.

If you know how to reach out to the students, they’ll do everything for you. Maybe that is what has contributed to a more peaceful coexistence in the school”.

Vice-principal
When unruly or disturbing behavior occurs, the school will call the parents for a meeting and try to involve them in solving the problem. However, parents that are close to the school staff and regularly attend meetings are mostly the parents of students with few disciplinary problems or risk behavior. It is more difficult to establish close relationships with families with members involved in gangs or with high-risk behaviors. Other families see themselves with a limited capacity to influence the behavior of their own children. Families that are absent or unsupportive, however, can facilitate or aggravate the risk of defiant or unruly behavior in their children. Even if teachers wish to protect and help these students, without family support, the school’s positive impact is reduced.

**Vice-principal**

> *It is important to influence in the daily lives of the students because these are very difficult realities, very complex realities for many families; the majority are low-income. It is true, as someone said, ‘Lessons, with hunger, don't get learned’. Therefore, it is necessary to truly solve structural problems, which can’t happen from one day to the next”.*

**Disempowerment – Empowerment**

Teachers and school staff directly engage in different kinds of prevention efforts, mostly with individual vulnerable or at-risk students. Sometimes, external organizations, public institutions or NGO, join in to implement wider school-based prevention interventions. The relationship between public schools and external organizations is often based on the scarce resources the school has at its disposal to confront the challenges of insecurity and gang presence. For public schools, extra educational materials, updated pedagogical support, and even novel possibilities for recreational activities are more than welcome. However, the resulting relationship can become unbalanced, leaving the staff and the local educational community disempowered, that is, in a subordinate position of passivity or dependency. This unequal relationship, together with the value of receiving new resources, may prevent the school from frankly expressing the real needs they have and be even less inclined to discuss differences of opinion or alternatives regarding the proposed activities. So, the risk is that externally designed interventions are implemented without considering its appropriateness.
They’ve abandoned us. It was marvelous, motivating for us and the students that some public institutions supported us. But since last year, nobody has turned up”.

Teacher

It is like going to a doctor. When you enter the office, he immediately says: ‘Take this’ and he gives me a prescription. ‘But doctor, I did not even tell you what I have and you already are giving me the medicine”.

Principal

By empowering the local school, the external organization fosters the input of local ideas and promotes participative efforts to co-formulate responses to the question of how to educate effectively and prevent violence and gang membership. Empowerment actively counteracts the disappointment of being overlooked and of less than promising results of externally-planned activities, because the responsibility is shared for the decision-making and entire implementation process. Accordingly, the learning process of what kind of interventions or activities do work is a collective process, and not only the responsibility of the external organization.

This research program identified three ways in which the daily efforts and experiences of the schools can be endorsed and recognized as relevant, and, at the same time, the school can be empowered to take on the co-responsibility for the decision-making and the implementation process. The first is through contextualization, i.e. discovering and taking into account the local context; the second is through participative actions, i.e. involving local stakeholders, school staff and the educational community in the design and implementation process; and the third is through social relations, i.e. building close relationships and new social dynamics with and among the local stakeholders, through commitment and a positive attitude.

When they arrive with a project and the community has not been consulted, the community isn’t interested. They are not interested to learn what this project offers”.

Teacher

Conflicts and tensions often arise from differing beliefs and expectations about how to be treated by external actors and how to cooperate with
We hope that all these [prevention-oriented activities] influence youth in a positive way, so that they forget violence and delinquency, and improve day by day. However, [in the community] the influence of the gangs is strong. This means, that outside the [prevention oriented] programs… and other efforts, another reality exists”.

Vice-principal
I’d make a [prevention-oriented] project work by taking into account the needs of the community, the school, and the students, that is, of the whole community”.

Teacher

CAR builds upon four basic project cycle phases: problem definition, formulation of the response, planning and implementation, and evaluation or reflection on lessons learned. First, the problem that need be attended by the initiative must be identified. Not all problems facing a school can be attended, and often neither all the aspects of one problem. After that, the second phase formulates a way of locally resolving this problem. This theory of change clarifies why this solution is expected to change the existing social relations and dynamics in and around the school that provoke insecurity, in favor of positive and attractive alternatives. In the next phase, the prevention-oriented activities will be planned out and implemented, involving an interwoven set of school actors and local stakeholders. In the fourth and last phase, the implementation of the activities will be evaluated and the lessons learned identified. The goal of these reflections is to adjust and improve the activities based on the experiences.

The process of defining the problem, formulating the solution, planning and implementing, and finally collectively evaluating the activities, implies the contextualization of the entire intervention, participative actions jointly organized with local actors, and the building social relations between a wide range of stakeholders. That means, that the three ways of empowering the local schools are transversal to whole the intervention.

The framework CAR is a tool for putting all these aspects in order, placing the empowerment of the public schools above all other principles. School-based prevention initiatives should place the development of positive social relations as central for its success. The objective of CAR is to guide the incorporation of the relationships among local stakeholders and the local social dynamics as integral parts in the school-based prevention programs in public schools.
Part II. The “Context-Actions-Relations” Intervention Framework

Introduction

Approximately half of Salvadoran public schools are located in communities characterized by social vulnerability, scarce resources and the presence of gangs. These circumstances have consequences in schools, making it difficult for children and youth to receive quality education in a secure environment.

As for the settings where schools operate, the Ministry of Education (MOE) notes the following are some of the risks that negatively affect their security: gangs, robberies, theft, drugs, extortion, sexual violence and carrying firearms and knives. It also explicitly points to cases of teachers being subjected to threats or extortion.1 This is compounded by precarious infrastructure, as well as a shortage of teaching materials and support personnel, leaving the public school and its educational community short on resources to prevent and avert insecurity from infiltrating in from the surroundings.

The Education in Risk and Conflict Situations (ERCS) research program set out to understand the way pedagogical relationships and social dynamics can facilitate or maintain a positive school environment and the quality of education in public schools in contexts where there is gang presence and insecurity. Four types of problematic situations present in these schools are identified in the study results:

- generalized fear and dread in the educational community;
- students threatening to involve gang members in educational processes;
- students who associate with the gang;
- in public schools, quality and learning processes suffer because of insecurity in their surroundings.

The study also revealed that many public schools are able to manage the situations they face on a daily basis without losing control, thanks in

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1 MOE. (May 31, 2019). 2014-2018 Quinquennial Observatory
large part to the commitment of the teaching teams. Schools have also stated the need for external assistance to prevent insecurity from interfering with educational processes. In communities with a gang presence, preventing insecurity is an oversized task for public schools. Furthermore, guidelines and general approaches to school violence and insecurity tend to focus on the students as potential victims, overlooking the fact that, in some circumstances, the entire school, the administration and teachers included, can be affected.²

In communities with gang presence, preventing insecurity is too large a task for public schools.

In view of these findings, the ERCS research program started to look into ways schools could benefit more effectively from programs aimed at preventing violence and insecurity. An intervention framework was developed that describes and provides guidelines for the processes of translating research findings into practice, focusing on the factors and processes that influence the effects of program or initiative implementation³. The proposed intervention framework is called “Context-Actions-Relationships” (CAR) and is intended to guide schools and external organizations in creating conditions and activities to facilitate participatory design and collaborative implementation of prevention initiatives. It provides general guidance for the school team, including principal and teachers, as well as external organizations and the educational community, to help them strengthen the school as a secure space.

CAR is an output of the ERCS research program, which, over the course of five years, studied the dynamics and circumstances faced by public schools in areas where there is insecurity, and their influence on educational relationships and processes. It also looked into different experiences these schools had with school-based prevention initiatives or programs, often promoted by international aid organizations or national and international NGOs.

Strengthening and empowering public school engagement in prevention initiatives is essential, not only for their organization and implementation to be successful, but also to guarantee that results are sustainable over time. Rather than considering the school a passive subject that, given its needs, is grateful for any external intervention, it should be engaged as a protagonist whose utility, relevance and sustainability is enhanced by educational prevention initiatives. The final aim is for secure spaces to be created in the schools; therefore, the schools themselves must sustain these spaces. However, the ERCS program found that prevention initiatives often finalized as soon as the investment by the external organization ended. Therefore, CAR stresses there is a need to transform this situation.

The schools and their educational community face diverse and changing circumstances. Therefore, predetermined approaches and one-size-fits-all solutions are rejected, in spite of their success elsewhere. CAR is not a checklist of prevention actions organized in a linear or chronological order to address a gamut of situations of insecurity; nor is it a manual or recipe book with ready-made solutions. CAR supports a variety of school-based prevention initiatives as long as they are set in the local context. To this end, local and external actors are encouraged to look into the local drivers of insecurity (contextualizing), describe the ways and means to achieve the desired changes in that context (theory of change), establish which local and external actors should be involved (social relations) and carry out the solution in a collaborative manner (participatory actions). The purpose is for schools to be empowered to prevent insecure situations with creativity and based on the particular context of each school and its community.

The innovation of the CAR framework and what makes it stand out among other school-based prevention approaches is that it emphasizes the importance of social and educational relationships for preventing insecurity. The relationships between the different actors in and around the school are determinant. Consider the relationships between teachers, administrators and students; between external organizations and the school administration; between the surrounding community and the teaching staff; etc. They all affect the way prevention works. The activities or content are tools for forging positive and productive social relationships, in which students can find role models; that is, they can observe and try out behaviors that have positive consequences. This enables them to develop in a way that keeps them away from violence and the lure of the gang.

**Strengthening Secure Spaces: Empowering Public Schools**

The CAR approach to preventing situations of insecurity involves more than preventing crime. Prevention is based on the importance of social relations and dynamics in preventing these situations at school, therefore, it can be characterized as **social prevention of insecurity**. The concept of social prevention emphasizes that individuals or groups that commit crimes are inserted in relationships and processes where they engage in- or are recipients of violent or threatening acts. The aim is to influence these relationships, in order to rein in the social processes that give rise to, or reward violent or criminal behavior, so that the social dynamics students are involved in are transformed.

The intervention framework seeks to do this by empowering schools and strengthening the dynamics that promote positive educational relationships, reducing the risk of delinquency.

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or violence and of students becoming involved with gangs, while fostering a pleasant and secure environment in schools, communities, and families. In this sense, CAR aims to guide public schools and external organizations in the process of designing, implementing, and learning from initiatives for strengthening secure spaces in education.

The intervention framework is not only intended for designing and implementing NGO prevention programs, it can also help in the development and implementation of MOE educational policies or school-based initiatives. For the sake of clarity, the framework refers to interventions by external organizations - which may be national NGOs, international aid agencies, or even MOE - but the intervention framework follows a logic that is valid for the schools’ own initiatives as well.
Prevention initiatives in public schools can be divided into four major stages, which correspond to the project management cycle: problem definition, response formulation, planning and implementation, and evaluation and lessons learned. Every intervention starts by defining the problem at hand, and a theory of change, leading to the formulation of a possible solution. Implementing the initiative or intervention to achieve the solution involves people, resources, time and processes, which are interlinked in the environment in all its complexity. Finally comes the moment for evaluation, reflection and identification of lessons learned, in order to reconsider the problem addressed, the actions implemented, and the solutions achieved, which may indicate there is a need to adjust and improve the intervention in light of experience.
The Three Pillars of the Intervention Framework

Each stage described above can be organized in several ways. The results of the ERCS program identify three pillars that cut across each stage: **contextualization, participatory actions and social relations.** (See chart below)

**Contextualization** involves reflecting on the characteristics of the locality, the needs, and interests of the participants; that is, adapting each stage to the local context. The school and the community or geographical environment come together to form a distinct social space with its own history, socioeconomic conditions, social relations among the different actors; and, these actors engage in local social dynamics. The school’s performance, its relationship with the educational community, the influence insecurity has on the lives of the inhabitants, and the situations where young students come across gang members in their daily lives are all part of the local social dynamics. This makes each local context distinct, unique, with its own way of influencing the success or failure of a prevention program or intervention.

An intervention or prevention program’s design and its implementation at the local level should acknowledge and take into account the context of the school and its community, even if it is an established intervention, and has already been tested elsewhere. Replicating or scaling up interventions that have been successful elsewhere can only work if they are adapted to the local context. Failure to take into account the socioeconomic conditions in the community, the current relationships and local dynamics among different stakeholders not only undermines the objectives, but it can also forestall the wider acceptance of the initiative. Preclusion from the process of design and implementation may leave the school and the surrounding community with the feeling that the intervention and its activities are imposed “from the outside” and do not correspond to the circumstances they experience on a daily basis, leading to tensions between the school and the external organization.

**Participatory Actions** are key at each stage, arising from the participation of various sectors, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Broad and inclusive activities
lead to relevance, which makes participation appealing to participants. Public schools often lack enough resources or the capacity to undertake prevention on their own. While it is true that an outside organization can provide important assistance, the relationship with the educational community is key. Parents and other actors in the extended educational community and its surroundings (authorities, organizations, NGOs, local churches, among others), know the school, the context and the local social relations and dynamics, therefore, their proximity enables them to intervene in some instances. Although these actors do not always have the resources, time, motivation or interest to do it on their own, they are natural allies for interventions for the social prevention of insecurity in schools. For this reason, the prevention initiative or program should undertake to engage these actors, get them involved and rely on them. In addition, their participation contributes to transparency, commitment and sustainability in relation to the entire educational community.

Effective social relations, with mutual respect, interest, communication and trust, need to be established, not only with students, teachers and parents, but with the wider educational community, that is, local stakeholders and authorities who also have an interest in the school running properly.

Often, the social relations established with different actors are more important than material resources. The processes of change are promoted and underpinned by the relationships between the actors, and by their commitment, encouragement, effort and dedication to the students. Close relationships are based on trust and respect, and are strengthened by appropriate behaviors and good communication practices. Social relationships not only foster a sense of ownership of the intervention and commitment to it, they become spaces where behaviors with positive consequences can be successful. Social relationships provide role models not only for students, but also for the school, the educational community and the external organization.

The results of the ERCS program point to three key relationships for the successful implementation of prevention interventions or programs in schools.

1. The relationship between the external organization and the school, in order to successfully organize and implement the intervention and its activities.

2. The relationship between the school and the parents, encouraging them to take an active role in the socio-educational processes at school, to take ownership of the activities, to contribute and implement their ideas and proposals, and to feel committed to the school.

3. The relationship between the school and the extended community, in order to engage the interest of different local actors and secure their commitment.

Participatory Actions: Broad and inclusive participation fosters relevant and attractive activities for participants.
The graphic below reflects the relationship among these elements. Then follows guidance and orientation on each aspect of CAR in preventing violence and promoting secure spaces in schools.
A prevention intervention or program in public schools with gang presence in the surrounding area needs to start by seeking to understand the dynamics that generate insecurity in the communities and in the schools. An assessment of the environment will help to identify the current problems, the effects on social dynamics, and the needs in the community. This is the basis to formulate clear objectives, specifying the type of prevention that needs to be implemented. These objectives can be set for the short term, detailing what each activity or series of activities aim to do, and for the medium term, specifying what the implementation of the entire intervention or program is to achieve.

**Contextualization**

- Understand the overall problem of insecurity in the school, in the surrounding community, and the underlying dynamics, in order to define the type of prevention that will be implemented.

- Identify the different dynamics that give rise to the problem of insecurity in the school and surrounding community.

- Establish the intervention or prevention program’s general objectives (medium term) to respond to the identified problem.
Participatory Actions

- Engage in interviews, conversations, meetings, home visits or others.
- Describe the problem to be addressed by the intervention and who it affects.
- Agree on the general objective of the intervention and the target population of this effort.
- Establish the specific objectives of the activities that lead to achieving the general objective.
- Identify the target groups and the kind of prevention directed at them.

Key Social Relationships

- The public schools - i.e., the teachers, administration and students - who understand the dynamics of insecurity in the school and, therefore, may have key ideas about possible causes and potential solutions.
- Parents, who understand the dynamics of insecurity in the community and the school, and have an informed opinion about the possible causes and potential solutions.
- Leaders and organizations in the surrounding community who are aware of the dynamics of insecurity in the community and school, and have an informed opinion about the possible causes and potential solutions.
- Local authorities, who may have a better understanding of the dynamics of insecurity in the community and school, and within their purview, can provide the school and community stakeholders the support and resources they require.

Implementation Indicators for the Pillars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextualization</th>
<th>Participatory Actions</th>
<th>Social Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ The specific local dynamics are taken into account in assessing the problem.</td>
<td>▪ The perspectives of local authorities are included.</td>
<td>▪ Various key local actors take ownership of the initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Local needs identified by the educational community are reflected.</td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Actors with different experiences with the issue of insecurity in the school and the surrounding community coordinate with the initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ The wider educational community (teaching staff, management, students, family) is engaged in drafting the problem and objectives.</td>
<td>▪ The initiative has engaged the interest of and received input from different actors, as well as their perspectives for potential solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Local target groups are identified for the intervention.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B) Formulate the Process of Change

Objective:
Formulate a theory of change and design the prevention intervention/program activities.

A prevention intervention or program must formulate the way it intends to achieve its objectives, i.e., explain how its activities will change the social relationships and dynamics that give rise to the disruptive or violent actions in the context of the school. In this process, describe the concrete activities that will be undertaken to transform the current situation of insecurity affecting the target group (e.g., students at risk of violence or use of violence) to a less insecure situation (e.g., where there is less risk of violence or of students becoming involved with a gang).

Activity design needs to take into account aspects such as who the activities will target, their interests, and the theory of change. In addition, it is important to make the activities relevant and attractive to the beneficiaries.

Contextualization

- Propose different types of activities that may have an impact on preventing and reducing the dynamics of insecurity in the school and the community.
- Define the target group for the different activities, and design activities that are attractive to each target group.

- Define the immediate (short term) objectives of the specific activities.
- Explain the way each activity or initiative influences social relations and dynamics and how it can contribute to preventing insecurity, as per the theory of change.

Participatory Actions

- Engage with key actors in visits and conversations, in order to identify the social relations, behaviors and beliefs that contribute to insecurity.
- Describe the way these relationships, behaviors and beliefs can be changed concretely to prevent insecurity, in discussion with the teachers, administrators, and key community stakeholders.
- Identify who in the school and community, or beyond, can help change these social dynamics and how they can be involved.
- Design concrete activities that are appealing to the different target groups, with immediate objectives, participants, responsibilities and follow-up.
Describe the way each specific activity changes participant relationships, behaviors and beliefs, and how, as a whole, they will contribute to the reduction of insecure situations in the school (general objective).

**Key Social Relationships**

- The administrators and teachers who understand the social dynamics in their school can propose ideas, so that the dynamics that lead to insecurity become dynamics that promote peaceful coexistence.
- Parents who understand the situation in the community and can elaborate on the aforementioned contributions of the teachers.
- External experts on the subject can contribute a supplementary vision from another disciplinary perspective.
### Implementation Indicators for the Pillars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextualization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ The social relations, behaviors and beliefs that lead to insecurity in the school and the surrounding community are identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The local target groups for the different activities and ensure that the activities are appealing to them are defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Theory of change is based on conditions in the school and community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Expertise from outside experts provides additional insight to broaden the local perspective.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participatory Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Relationships, behaviors and beliefs in the school and community that can be changed to prevent insecurity are described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Those in the school and community, or externally, can intervene in these social dynamics are identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Specific and appealing activities that can change social dynamics and prevent insecurity are designed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Families contribute to the design process based on their knowledge of the circumstances in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Families and students actively participate in the design of activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ External specialists help with their input and insight into the school and community and ways of changing local dynamics.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ The teaching staff and the school administration acknowledge that the initiative’s formulation of the theory of change and the design of activities contribute to the situation at the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Families and other local actors acknowledge the initiative’s formulation of the theory of change and the design of activities contribute to the situation in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ External specialists are confident that the initiative’s theory of change and design are appropriate.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Specific activities must be organized in such a way that the various stakeholders are motivated to perform the tasks and assume their responsibilities. This calls for the external organization and the school to make a substantial effort to strengthen the commitment and interest of the members or persons in charge, so that they share their enthusiasm and motivate the teachers (or other actors) to carry out the activities.

If the school staff perceives a lack of enthusiasm or of interest in their participation, or that administrative logistics are more important than the results of the activities themselves, they will interpret these as a lack of commitment on behalf of the outside organization. This can provoke deep frustration in the school and the educational community and seriously affect the aim of achieving the objectives of preventing insecurity. Therefore, the organization should avoid giving the impression that they are simply fulfilling their acquired commitments without prioritizing the impact that the activities could have on the school and the community.

Likewise, the organization needs to clearly understand what is required to implement the activities adequately, in terms of personnel, resources and materials, and prepare these beforehand. The schools, families and the community often lack economic resources, so contributing substantial resources needed to carry out the different activities is a hardship for them. Therefore, it is essential for the organization to keep in mind the material and staff limitations in the schools and the community where the students are from, so that the issue of resources does not hinder successful activity implementation.

**Contextualization**

- Work with the organizers on a plan to cover the different activities and their implementation, and anticipate the financial, material and human resources required.
- Design a feasible implementation schedule that takes into account the time commitments of all participants.
- Identify mechanisms and spaces for transparent communication with participants.
- Manage feasible, adequate and sustainable resources, that are enough but without being a financial burden for the family, school and community.

**Participatory Actions**

- Organize work meetings with the different organizers to plan the activities and coordinate their implementation.
Come to a consensus on participants’ schedules, including the target group, to ensure implementation takes place at convenient times.

Prepare a feasible budget according to the material and human resources required for implementation.

Manage material and human resources effectively and transparently to meet the needs during implementation.

Agree on the responsibilities and assign roles to carry out the activities.

Implement the planned activities.

Key Social Relationships

- Foster good relations between the activity organizers in the school or the external organization, so that the activities are carried out properly.
- Promote motivational relationships between the organizers of the activities and the target group, so that the participants feel encouraged and comfortable in the activities.
- Teachers, parents and other actors dedicate time to the development of the activities. Dedicating time is a valuable aspect of the relationship and a significant resource; it is important to acknowledge and appreciate it.

Implementation Indicators for the Pillars

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<tr>
<td>▪ The time and characteristics of the participants who carry out the activities are acknowledged.</td>
<td>▪ Different actors participate in the planning, coordination and transparent implementation of activities.</td>
<td>▪ Relations are cordial and motivational between the organizers of the activities and the target group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The financial, material and human resources required for the intervention and the activities are identified.</td>
<td>▪ Everyone engages in preparing a feasible budget.</td>
<td>▪ The representatives and participants of the external institution, the school and the community maintain a motivational relationship that encourages dedication, time commitment and sharing of experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The resources required do not become a burden for the family, school and community finances.</td>
<td>▪ Participants take ownership of the activities and assume responsibilities and are committed to them.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
D) Evaluation and Lessons Learned

Each intervention to promote safe spaces in schools is an opportunity to learn lessons on social prevention; that is, to learn and contribute to knowledge in the matter of preventing insecurity in schools. Reflective and participatory processes can lead to collective and individual learning, which, in turn, can be shared with other educational communities, local and national authorities, and inform decision-making processes.

Although educational or prevention projects usually undergo a more formal process of evaluation, this process is valuable for understanding and assessing the intervention in terms of its positive and negative outcomes and impacts. Only when various actors close to the intervention participate can the process of reflection assess whether the theory of change is working, whether the objectives are being met, whether the participation of the various local stakeholders and the educational community is being achieved, and whether adjustments should be made to the activities and the implementation process. Moreover, this also makes it possible to assess whether the intervention is responding adequately to the local context of the school and the community, and whether it manages to generate positive social relations.

Although the schools do not always visualize this stage, it is the link that can provide the process of reflection with sustainability and install processes that generate positive social relations in school and community life. Prevention initiatives are continuous processes that coexist or are interlinked with educational processes. It is likely that, in a first year of intervention, it will not always be possible to get all key actors to participate or all activities implemented as desired. In the following years or next activities, it is possible to try again and improve participation and implementation along the way, and obtain better results in the longer term.

**Contextualization**

- Use participatory processes to reflect on and evaluate the different actions to draw lessons from the experience of implementing the intervention.
- Assess the theory of change, the activities and the implementation in terms of their potential for promoting security in school and sustainability in the future.
- Evaluate the different social relationships and levels of participation for their importance in the success of the intervention or prevention program.
Generate ideas and leverage lessons learned to adapt the prevention initiative to the circumstances in the school and surrounding community.

**Participatory Actions**

- Organize spaces for participatory reflection during the course of the intervention.
- Observe implementation processes, results and achievements, difficulties encountered and their solutions, in order to understand which processes make the intervention successful, and which present obstacles.
- Systematize the processes, achievements and difficulties in order to demonstrate what has been learned and to share lessons with others.

Identify changes in social relationships, not only among the different actors of the educational community, but also among peers (teacher peers, parent peers and student peers).

- Share the good practices and difficulties encountered –i.e., lessons learned– with other schools and communities.

**Key Social Relationships**

- Relationships of trust between the school, the community, and external institutions in order to achieve transparent, ongoing and fluid communication before, during and after implementation.

**Implementation Indicators for the Pillars**

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<tr>
<td>Activities for reflection/evaluation are organized with the participation of the school, the educational community, local stakeholders and the external organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities are assessed as to whether or not they were successful in promoting security in the school and why or why not.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The reflection process includes relevant questions and discussions to help improve the prevention initiative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All sectors involved in the intervention have the opportunity to provide feedback, evaluate and reflect on the process and achievements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lessons learned are shared internally and externally with the educational community and stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processes of reflection and evaluation are carried out through ongoing and smooth communication between the school, the community and the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The reflection process identifies the social relationships that have been key in the design, implementation and evaluation stages of school-based prevention activities.</td>
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</table>
References


The intervention framework “Context–Actions–Relations” (CAR) is a tool that orients school-based prevention initiatives with three fundamental pillars: 

- **a** contextualization or the adaption of the intervention to the local setting;
- **b** participatory actions, involving local actors, school staff, and the educational community in the design and implementation process; and
- **c** the investment in social relations, that is, building close relationships with a broad range of local actors. These three pillars traverse the whole intervention, with the empowerment of the public schools as the leading principle.

The objective of CAR is to promote the inclusion of relationships among local actors and the local social dynamics as an integral part of school-based prevention.