Existing as *Gbonhi*
Adolescents and youth, so-called “microbes”, engaging in violence in Abobo
(Abidjan, Ivory Coast)

February 2017

Illustrated Synthesis
What we learn about the phenomenon of youths and (pre)adolescents known as microbes

1. **Urban dwellers in the margins of the city and society:**
The urban environment plays a defining role in promoting their violent trajectory.

2. **Do not confuse microbes with street children:**
The majority of youngsters known as microbes maintain an emotional bond with their families.

3. **Young adults lead the way:**
The majority of microbes are between 8 and 25 years old.
Beyond poverty, the quest for social recognition: The group offers these youths the opportunity “to become somebody”.

Succeeding through violence: The use of violence is seen as a springboard for social and economic success.

Dangerous stigmatization: Dehumanising these youths will encourage them to fall back on their given identities as microbes and confine them to society’s periphery.

Between denial and ignorance: Very few parents are aware and/or willing to acknowledge that their child is a microbe.

Repression fuels violence: Essentially repressive by nature, the community and policy response fuels the cycle of violence.

These illustrations are inspired by bikablo® publications: www.bikablo.com
A GLOBAL, INTEGRATED RESPONSE

A more objective and nuanced view

Social recognition is key

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Make Abobo economically attractive

The school, a violent-free environment and a driver of success

Coherent multi-sector responses

Ce que cela implique en termes de réponses
1. Humanise society’s way of looking at these youths and adolescents

2. Leave sensationalism behind

3. Implement a dedicated information and monitoring system

4. Make social recognition the core of reintegration initiatives

5. Build on emotional and social bonds

6. Make the best use of local social workers’ capacities

7. Encourage Abobo’s youth and young adults to generate fresh opportunities

8. Facilitate investments in Abobo: a win-win strategy

9. Involve the community in bringing peace to schools

10. Reinforce schools’ capacities to manage violent behaviour

11. Make school a driver of social advancement

12. Encourage community initiatives favouring non-violent means of self-defence

13. Define a clear legal framework

14. Develop a framework for concerted action

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