

# Youth livelihoods, exclusion and violence: some thoughts on the psycho-social dimension



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# Questions



- How useful is the ‘psycho-social’ domain useful in explaining the impacts and origins of (youth political) violence?
- What are the conceptual and policy implications of such a perspective for understanding and addressing violence?

*livelihood*

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*psycho-social  
wellbeing*

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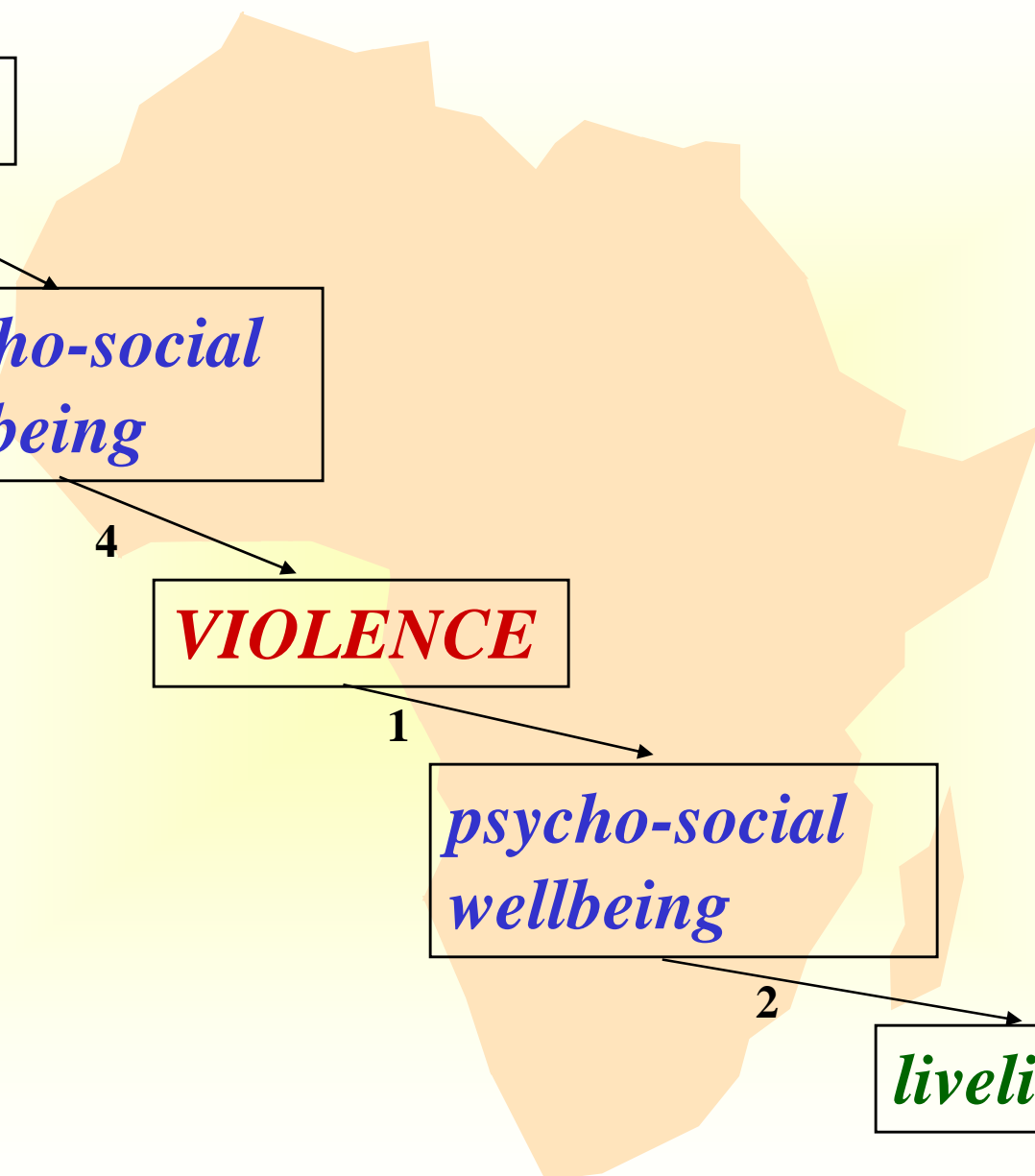
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## *What do we mean by psycho-social?*

- The term refers to the dynamic relationship that exists between **psychological** and **social** effects, each continually interacting with and influencing the other.
- ‘Psychological effects’ are those which affect different levels of functioning including **cognitive** (perceptions and memory as a basis for thoughts and learning), **affective** (emotions), and **behavioural**.
- ‘Social effects’ pertain to altered **relationships**, **family** and **community networks**, and **economic status**.

*1: Impact of*

**violence** on **psycho-social wellbeing**

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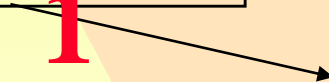
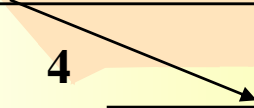
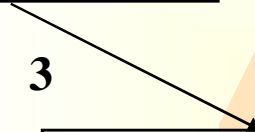
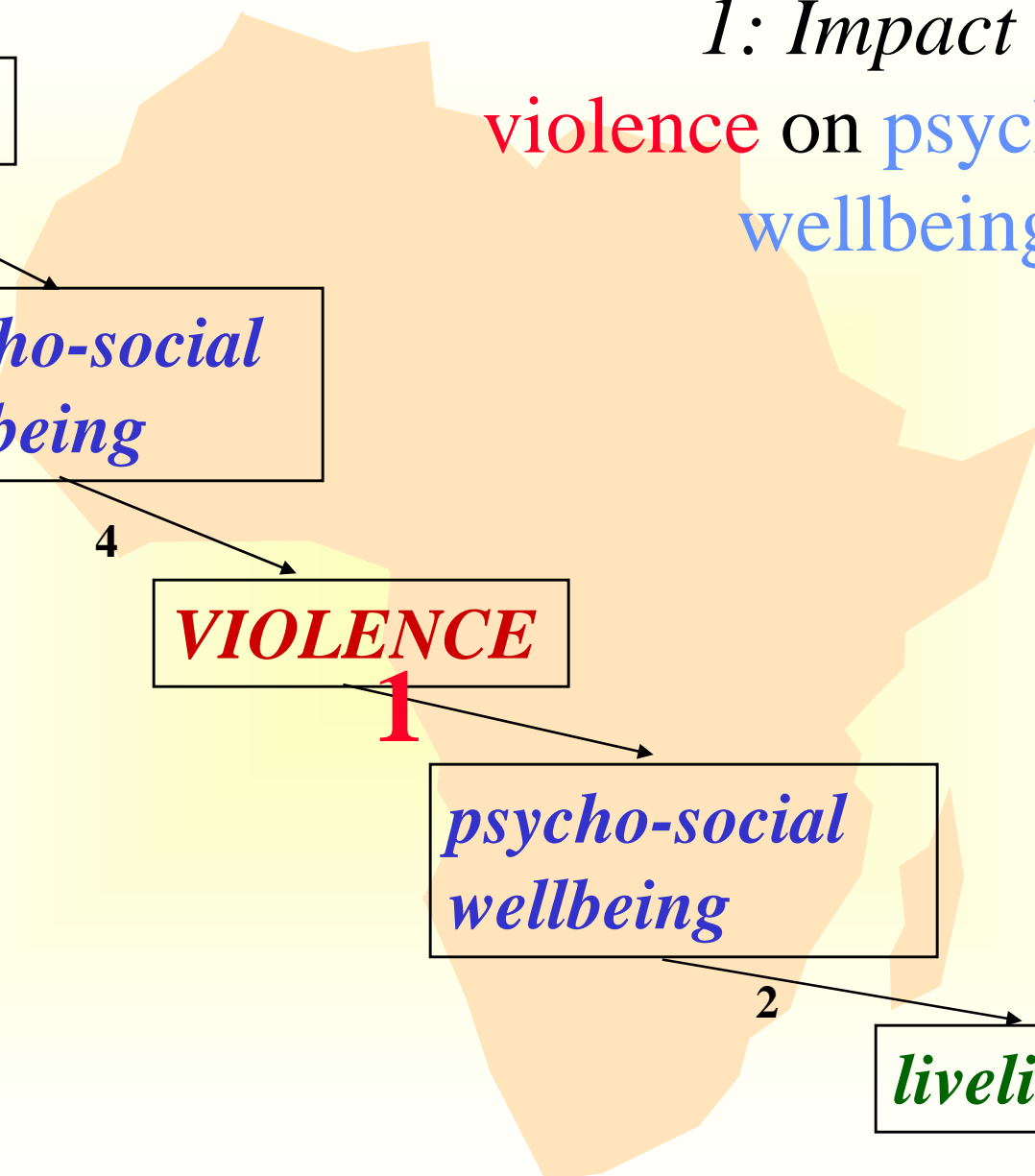
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*Prevalence of mental health disorders in adult populations affected by complex emergencies*

<i>Complex emergency population [point prevalence]</i>	<b>PTSD</b> %	<b>Depression</b> %
Cambodian refugees in Thailand	37	68
Bosnian refugees in Croatia	26	39
Kosovo Albanians in Kosovo	17	<i>n/a</i>
Karenni refugees in Thailand	5	42
Cambodia	29	<i>n/a</i>
<i>Baseline popn. [lifetime prevlce.]</i>		
US population	1	8
US population	6	16

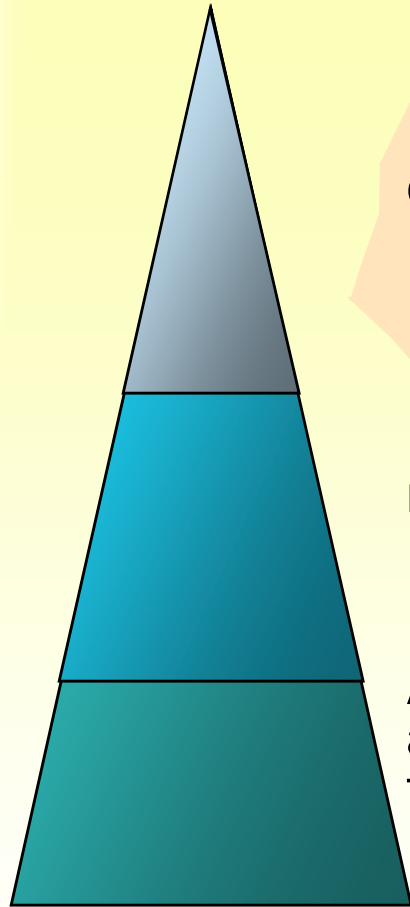
*Prevalence of mental health disorders in adult populations affected by complex emergencies*  
(cont.)

<i>Complex emergency population [point prevalence]</i>	<b>PTSD</b> %	<b>Depression</b> %
Iraq	29	63
Occupied Palestinian Territories	33	<i>n/a</i>
Darfur	<i>n/a</i>	63
Afghanistan	<i>n/a</i>	68

*Prevalence of mental health disorders in children and adolescents affected by complex emergencies*

<i>Complex emergency population [point prevalence]</i>	<b>PTSD</b> %	<b>Depression</b> %
234 Children in Gaza Strip	41	n/a
492 Israeli children during SCUD	26	n/a
170 Cambodian adolescent refugees	27	n/a
Cambodian refugees	31	69
480 Croatian refugee children	n/a	11
<i>Baseline population [lifetime pr]</i>		
Children (US)	n/a	2
9-17 year olds (US)	2	6

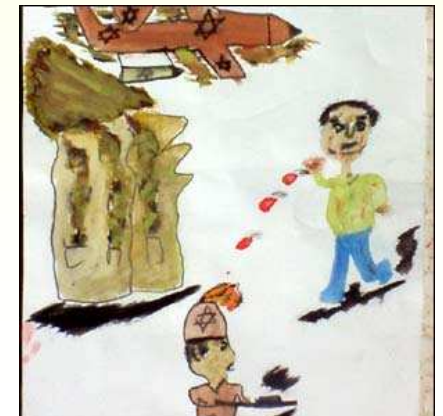
# *The relationship between mental and psycho-social disorders in post-conflict settings*



1-3% of all populations have psychiatric disorders. In conflict, the number may increase

For 30-40%, the symptoms below will persist, becoming more severe and will interfere with day-to-day living

A large part of the population may suffer nightmares, anxiety, easy irritability, etc. in the days and weeks following trauma



## *Reservations about medicalization*

Critiques of PTSD as culturally and historically specific, an invention constructed from sociopolitical ideas as much as psychiatric ones, as a legitimization of ‘victimhood’ (Summerfield, etc).

PTSD, counseling, etc, can undermine indigenous healing mechanisms, and individualize collective problems.

*But, while distress or suffering is not psychopathology, trauma can cause long-term debilitation.*

*The alternative is a cultural relativism which indicates little about appropriate and compassionate response.*

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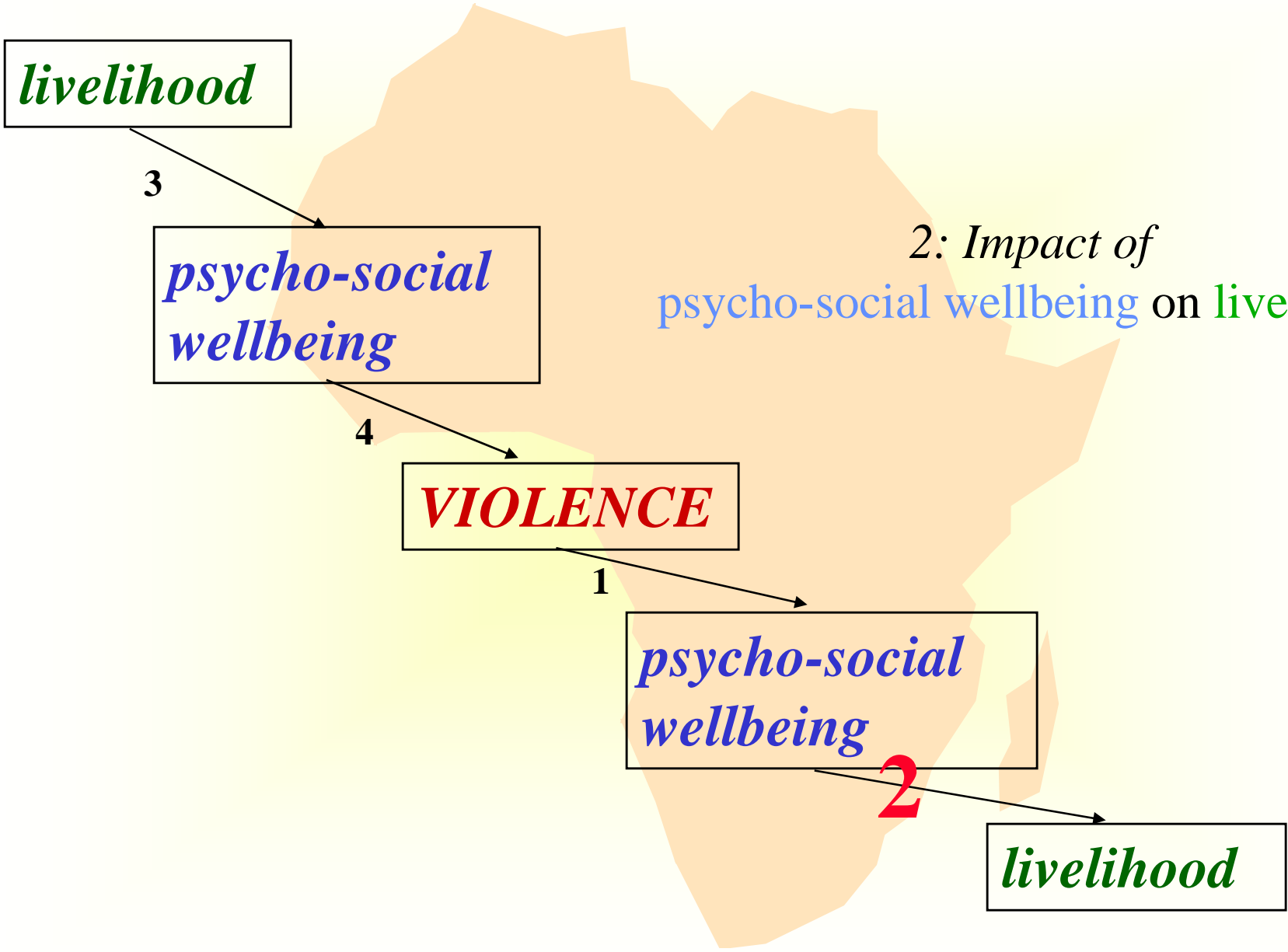
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2: Impact of psycho-social wellbeing on livelihood



## *2: Impact of* psycho-social wellbeing on livelihood

- Psycho-social health can affect employment, employability, productivity.
- Those with depression and other mental illnesses show significantly higher rates of unemployment, absenteeism, 'presenteeism', difficulties in performing mental and interpersonal tasks, etc.
- Studies of US Vietnam veterans have shown that, depression was associated with 45% lower hourly wages, and PTSD with a lower likelihood of working.
- Studies of mental health impacts in post-conflict developing countries, show youth to be more vulnerable to unemployment than adults (though could be due to identity and skills as much as psychological stress as such).

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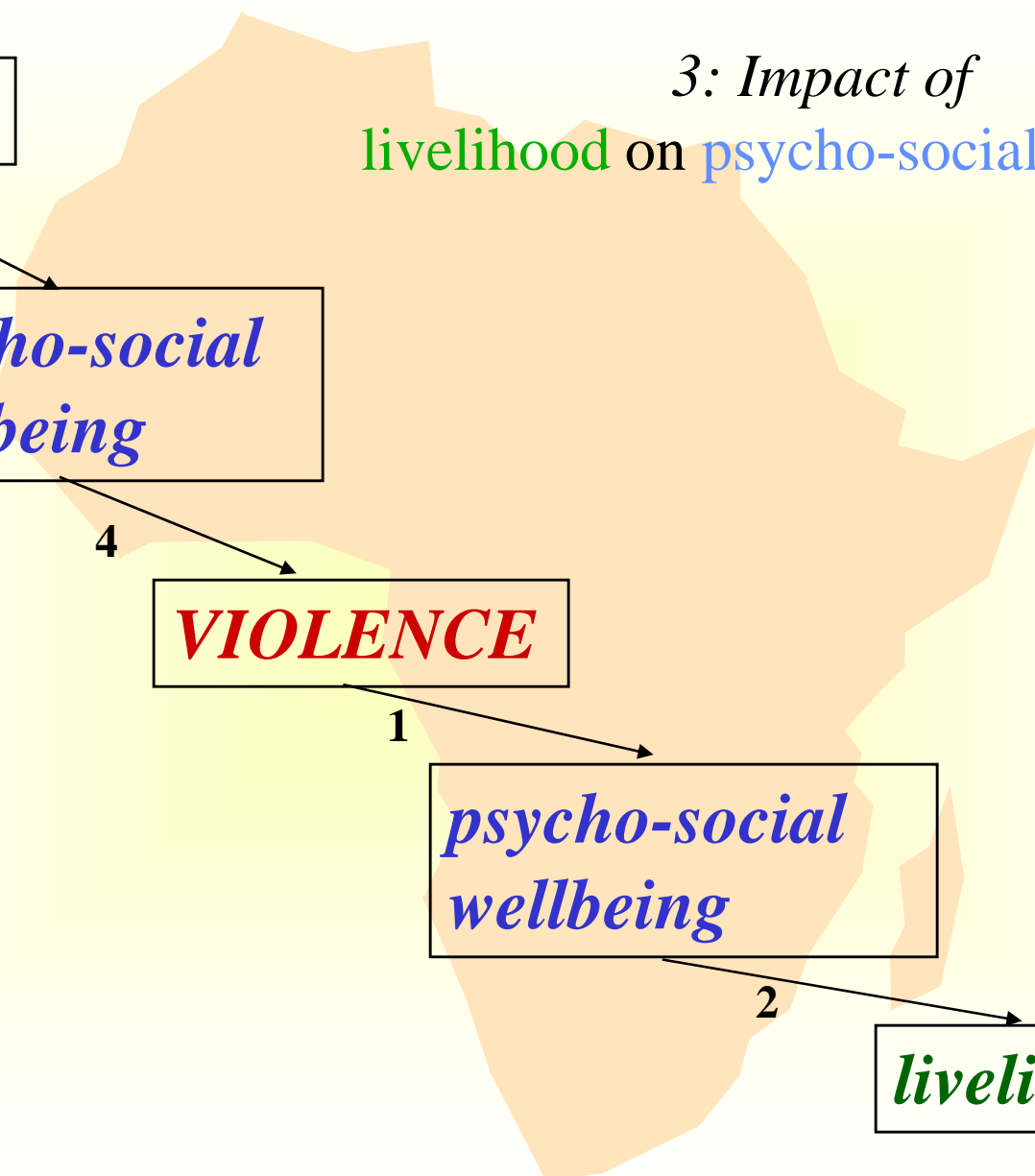
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3: Impact of  
livelihood on psycho-social wellbeing

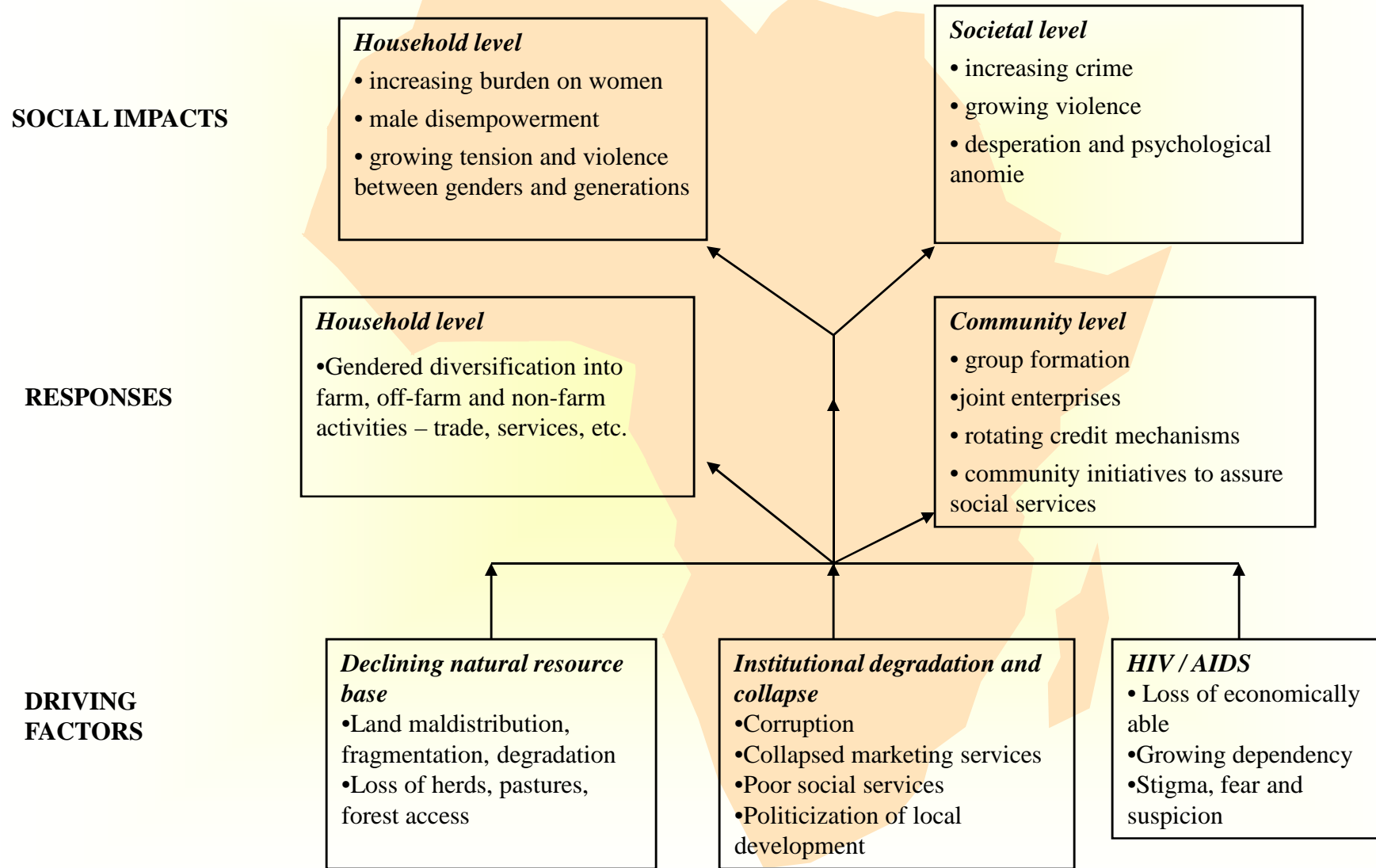


### *3: Impact of* **livelihood** on **psycho-social wellbeing**

The erosion of livelihoods (or the simple lack of opportunity) may result in:

- unemployment /underemployment
- marginal or illegal occupations
- changes in gender division of labour and responsibilities within the household
- intergenerational conflict over resources
- intergenerational effects of deprivation (culture of poverty, role models, etc.
- crisis of gender identity
- [in post conflict or radicalized situations, ‘traditional’ aspects of culture may be reasserted to the disadvantage of youth and women]

# Example: Driving Factors, coping responses and social impacts: a conceptual schema for social change in rural Kenya



## *Changing gender relations in Kenyan households*

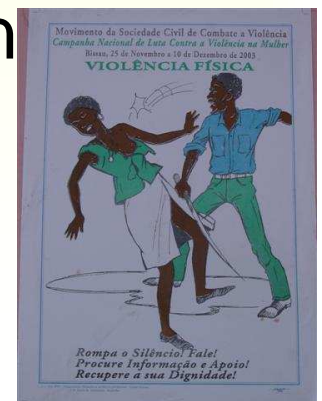
- Gender relations transformed by shifts in livelihoods
- Male livelihoods (export crops, livestock/ pastoralism, labour migration) eroded
- New opportunities extend traditional female roles (food crop prodn., petty trade, informal services, beer brewing, casual labour, domestic service)
- Increasing burden of women; withdrawal and disempowerment of men undermines social value, identity and self-esteem of men
- Rising domestic violence.
- Half of all Kenyan women have experienced violence since they were 15
- One in four women experienced violence over the last year
- Gender violence linked to alcohol abuse

## *Changing inter-generational relations in Kenyan households*

- Increasing tension between parents and children
- Youth often unemployed and at home
- Conflicts over
  - land
  - secondary school fees
  - contribution to household expenses
  - lifestyle
- Increasing incidence of violence
- Lack of role models related to changing role of husbands

# *Crisis of masculinity*

- Redefinition of gender roles
- Formal, rhetorical, development focus on women
- Difficulty in fulfilling traditional male roles / transitioning to adulthood
- Sense of failure
- Tension between genders
- Inter-generational conflict
- Violence may result
- Intensified under conditions of displacement
- Not universal: c.f. Evolving gender roles in Burundi



*Psycho-social wellbeing is influenced by other characteristics of the socio-economic environment:*

- erosion of livelihood systems
- changing social roles (e.g. gender, age, traditional authority)
- social breakdown and fragmentation
- rapid urbanization
- national and international migration
- poverty and social exclusion
- political marginalization and repression
- displacement
- disasters and emergencies
- conflict and war
- chronic diseases (e.g. HIV/AIDS)



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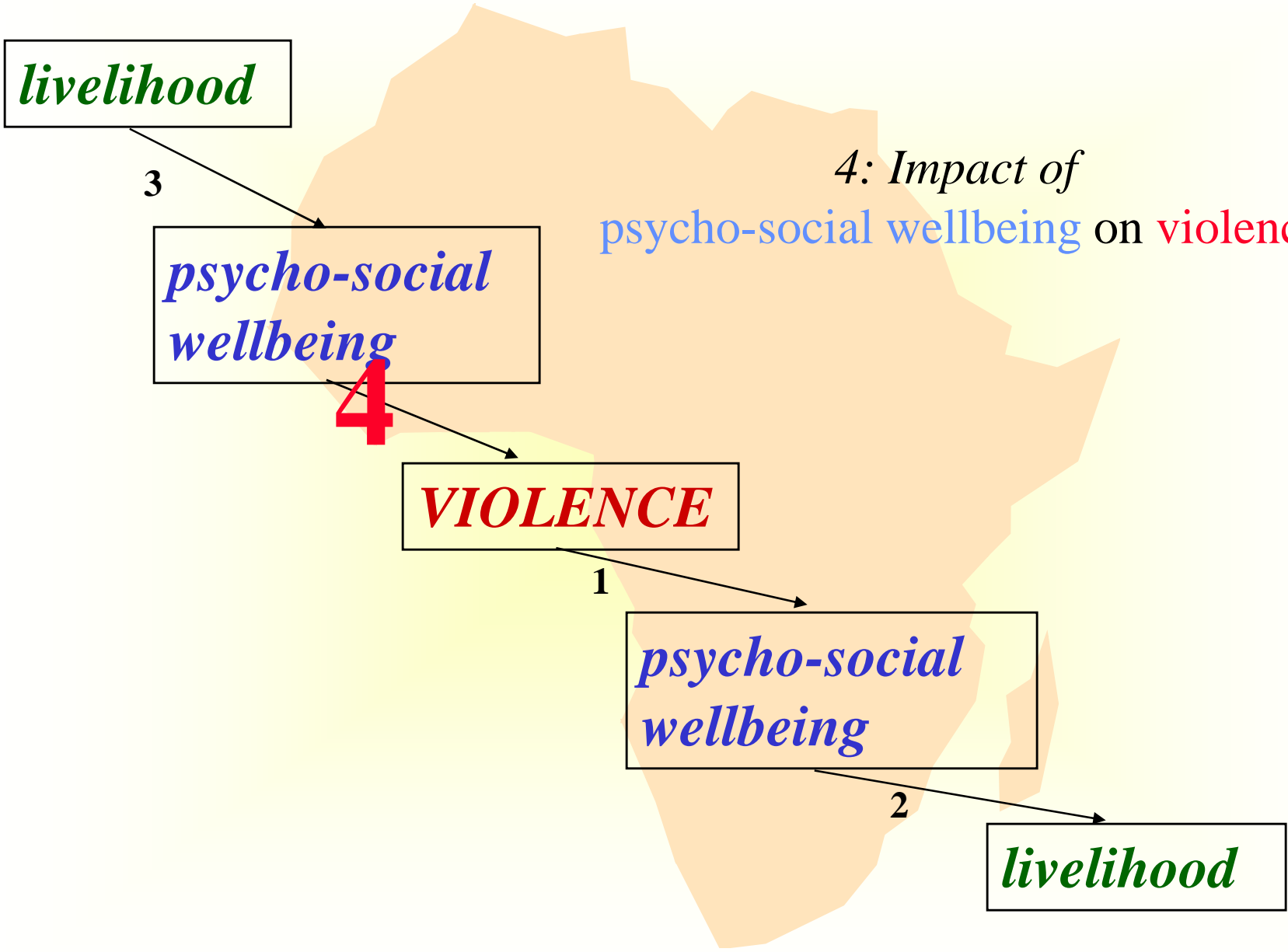
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4: Impact of *psycho-social wellbeing* on **violence**





*4: Impact of*  
psycho-social wellbeing on violence

The influence of experience and states of mind on behaviour.....

*E.g. manifestations of growing violence and insecurity in Kenya*

- Increasing criminality, armed gangs, often extreme violence, spreading to rural areas
- Vigilantism, extortion/protection and lynching
- Political violence
- Land clashes
- Gender-based violence
- Violence in institutions
- Violence becoming arbitrary, extreme, sexualized
- Culture of violence, (in politics, in schools)
- Impact on migration, community social composition, local economic development

# *Violence turned inward?*

## *Substance abuse and psychological anomie in Kenya*

- Alcohol abuse
  - Affects 70% of households (KMRI)
  - Widespread problem (sometimes regarded as the main problem)
  - Shifts in consumption patterns (more regular, distilled, younger users)
  - Relation to unemployment
- Depression
  - 37% of sample had been depressed (over poverty, health, unemployment, domestic violence)
  - Statistics for youth depression high, esp. male (10%)
  - Link with AIDS, alcoholism/ substance abuse,
- Suicide
  - Official statistics have little meaning, but anecdotal evidence
  - High rates of suicidality among youth. (10 % young women had attempted)

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# *Implications (1)*

- Psycho-social wellbeing is affected by, and in turn affects, economic, political and social change, and especially conflict, poverty, and social/political exclusion
- Psycho-social health is an employment, as well as a well-being issue. Hence, addressing psycho-social health can improve productivity, growth, incomes, and health and promote human security.

## *Implications (2)*

- Cost-effective interventions and responses to psycho-social challenges exist:
  - Integrating psycho-social concerns into health care & other sectors
  - Supporting psycho-social health promotion and treatment through community-based efforts
  - Supporting traditional healers and cultural resources
- Life skills and awareness training can promote constructive shifts in roles and attitudes

## *Implications (3)*

- Causes of violence are multiple and complex, but partly rooted in the social and moral order. The psycho-social domain can help us to understand the origins of violent behaviours in the life experience of individuals.
- At the social level, *anomie* -- fed factors such as lack of economic opportunity and rising levels of hopelessness and resentment, may be a useful explanatory notion.
- Equity, inclusion and social justice are central to peaceful societies
- Development planning should pay more attention to the social impacts of economic changes, especially to equity, marginalization, and the erosion of livelihoods (e.g. land reform)
- Role for public debate on sensitive social issues (Sen's deliberative democracy)

*Thank you!*



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