



# POLICY BRIEF

## Preventing violence

### Lessons about after-school programming

Penny Parenzee

To address the high levels of violence in South Africa, government, non-governmental organisations and academic institutions need to collaborate. But these sectors have different mandates, practices and systems. Coordination is necessary and requires a well-resourced team that understands the importance of relationships, offers leadership and can make systems work to meet identified needs. Lessons from the Western Cape's After School Game Changer show what coordination and collaboration can achieve.

## Key findings

Lessons from the After School Game Changer about collaboration:

- ▶ Collaboration across sectors is necessary to prevent violence. NGOs, academic institutions and government need to collaborate to ensure families and communities receive services and programmes to reduce risks and increase safety.
- ▶ Collaboration requires mutual benefit, clear roles and responsibilities and good communication, and it needs to be guided. It must be planned for, managed and incentivised.
- ▶ Participants need to have a shared vision and goals.
- ▶ Collaborating to prevent violence requires partnerships between organisations and institutions of different sizes, with different operating principles and practices and different interests and motivators.
- ▶ Champions in government and in communities who understand what is required to prevent violence are needed.

## Recommendations

- ▶ As a Pathfinder country of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, South African government departments, NGOs, researchers and development partners are committed to implementing the seven evidence-informed INSPIRE strategies.<sup>1</sup> Creating safe environments and providing education and life skills are particularly important for preventing violence.
- ▶ The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is well positioned to lead the implementation of these two strategies – more specifically, to promote actions in order to prevent violence.
- ▶ The DBE at provincial level must engage teacher unions, school governing bodies, parents and learners to work towards the provision of

Effective coordination requires:

- ▶ A skilled team who understand their responsibilities and how their role relates to the overall strategic vision.
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability. A coordinating team must be able to identify and respond to changes in the situation. In the case of the After School Game Changer this meant gathering data to track changes in the involvement of learners and practitioners and finding ways to sustain their engagement. It also meant identifying ‘unusual partners’ to enable new ways of seeing the issue.
- ▶ A coordinating team must have sufficient authority to be able to make decisions and influence the decisions of others. It must be able to identify opportunities, shape plans and inform discussions in ways that sustain momentum and energy.
- ▶ Coordination takes time and requires good planning and good communication – all of which require reliable, stable funding.

after-school programmes at all public schools, specifically low- and no-fee schools.

- ▶ The DBE at national level must require provincial departments to work with stakeholders delivering after-school programmes in order to monitor the impact of these programmes in the province.
- ▶ Given existing innovations in the country to prevent violence, such as the After School Game Changer, participating departments as well as NGOs and researchers should rigorously monitor these interventions. This will deepen our understanding of how to sustain inter-sectoral collaboration and generate evidence on the impact of these violence prevention initiatives.

## Introduction

Over the past 10 years the evidence that violence can be prevented has been mounting. Increasingly donors and governments are responding to the evidence presented by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and others that shows that initiatives aimed at building the social, emotional and behavioural well-being of youth have a profound impact, reducing aggressive behaviour towards others and boosting their educational performance, thereby increasing their prospects for a more prosperous and healthy life.

In 2002 the WHO released its *World report on violence and health* to advocate for more attention to, and resourcing of, the prevention of violence.<sup>2</sup> The report highlighted the magnitude of different forms of violence and various prevention interventions. This was followed by a year-long global campaign on violence prevention.

To minimise risk factors for violence, projects with several components must be designed to work together

In 2016 the WHO introduced the INSPIRE Framework – a technical package of seven evidence-informed strategies to end violence against children.<sup>3</sup> The value of interventions that prevent violence, such as providing additional academic support and life skills programmes, strengthening parenting and caregiver support and creating safe environments, is that they have a positive effect beyond merely preventing violence.

For example, some parenting programmes not only reduce the parents' use of corporal punishment but also equip them with skills to better support the emotional health and positive development of their children.<sup>4</sup> These in turn increases children's chances of doing better at school and models behaviours that enable them to have positive social interactions.

The recommendations highlighted in the 2002 WHO report included strengthening social, health and justice responses for victims of violence; integrating strategies to prevent violence into social and educational policies; and increasing collaboration and the exchange of information about how violence can be prevented. The INSPIRE

framework provides a holistic approach for ending violence against children.

In order to minimise risk factors for violence and provide support to individuals, families and communities, interventions with several components (such as parenting programmes along with after-school programmes) have to be designed to work together. In the South Africa context, families are confronted with personal experiences of trauma, juggle limited economic resources to survive and are located in areas where exposure to violence in public spaces is commonplace.<sup>5</sup> Many forms of support are required to address these challenges.

Collective experiences of violence, past and present, are especially evident in the most impoverished communities where it is difficult to access good quality child care services, and where opportunities for adults and children are limited. The stress of deprivation within the home and within broader society influences how people relate to each other as partners, parents or caregivers and friends. Violence and deprivation have a complex and reciprocal relationship that no single intervention can address alone. Globally, solutions increasingly promote inter-sectoral collaboration.<sup>6</sup>

Collaboration – working together towards a shared purpose – is necessary to prevent violence. It must be fostered across sectors and institutions. However, inter-sectoral collaboration is not easily achieved. This policy brief reflects on the experiences of the After School Game Changer in the Western Cape, a violence prevention intervention that fosters cross-sectoral collaboration. It highlights the conditions under which collaboration has thrived. These lessons could provide guidance to others who are initiating or who are willing to drive collaborative interventions to prevent violence.

## Violent realities

Police statistics for South Africa cast light on the stark reality that violence in South Africa is on the rise. The recently released 2018/19 police statistics show that South Africa has a murder rate of 36.4 per 100 000, almost six times the international average. In the same period, while the number of women murdered remains alarmingly high, there has reportedly been a decrease compared to the previous year. Over the 2018/19 period, the number of boys and girls murdered increased from

the previous year. The murder of children increased by 2.9% and the attempted murder of children by 11.8%.

In the Western Cape the areas with the highest rates of murder and attempted murder are Nyanga, Philippi East, Delft and Khayelitsha – township areas plagued by high unemployment and extreme poverty.<sup>9</sup> The 2015 national survey on violence against children in South Africa,<sup>10</sup> and the 2018 longitudinal study on violence from birth to 20+<sup>11</sup> showed the extent to which black youth from impoverished areas are predominantly the victims of crime and, more often than not, among the perpetrators of violent crimes.

These studies each illustrate the immense stress that a large proportion of young people face as a consequence of living in areas where there is repeated exposure to violence. The stress from living in constant fear for one's safety, together with the disadvantage of being black and coming from economically strained homes, makes it hard for young people to concentrate and cope with schooling. These studies reveal the daily struggles that confront young people and that serve as barriers to their attaining success at school, and reaching their full potential in life.

## Cost of violence

The impact of exposure to violence is profound, with debilitating effects on the well-being of individuals, families, communities and the society at large.<sup>12</sup> For children the consequences are dire. Children who see or experience violence are more likely to suffer severe depression, struggle to engage with other children socially and perform poorly at school.<sup>13</sup>

Over time, exposure to violence in childhood results in increased susceptibility to drug and alcohol abuse, significant mental health problems, risky sexual behaviours and criminality.

Interventions are needed to disrupt violent pathways so that children's potential to thrive is enabled, allowing individuals, families, communities and society to reap the benefits of safe environments.

The economic costs of violence reinforce the urgency of strategic interventions. Violence against children<sup>14</sup> and violence against women<sup>15</sup> have been estimated to amount to R238.6 billion and R42.4 billion, respectively.

These costs include the direct costs of health care, mental health care and the criminal justice system, and the indirect opportunity costs – such as missing a job interview as a result of a violent experience. South Africa cannot afford not to reduce and prevent violence.

## Essential role of coordination

The good news is that after-school programmes have been shown to be effective in disrupting destructive, risk-taking behaviours among young people.<sup>16</sup> In South Africa, where children aged 0–11 years were found to be more vulnerable to rape between the hours after school and before caregivers return from work, after-school programmes are also recognised as being instrumental in keeping children safe.<sup>17</sup>

Internationally, programmes that focus on building life skills and social skills have demonstrated an impact in reducing behavioural problems and enabling improved social adjustment as well as academic performance.<sup>18</sup>

Global evidence and local research about the aspirations of young people in South Africa,<sup>19</sup> informed the Western Cape After School Game Changer (ASGC) that was launched in 2016.<sup>20</sup> These studies sketched the impact that multiple levels of deprivation have on the well-being of our young people.

After-school programmes are effective in disrupting destructive, risk-taking behaviours among young people

Youth articulated unhappiness with their lives, expressed concerns about their safety and despondency with the lack of alternatives as well as the absence of positive role models. The ASGC focuses on optimising the available after-school programmes so that young people from low- and no-fee schools have the opportunity, on a regular basis, to engage in activities that not only build academic skills but also facilitate creative expression, equip them with life skills – such as conflict resolution – and encourage them to take part in sport.

These activities allow young people to be exposed to alternative ways of seeing and being in the world – role-modelling positive social engagement and widening their social networks.

The ASGC identified ‘four levers to drive change’, namely:

- Create an enabling environment for learners and providers of after-school programmes
- Provide quality programmes
- Build the capacity of the sector
- Expand after-school programmes through collaboration and nurturing partnerships<sup>21</sup>

Working collaboratively with the City of Cape Town, government departments and several non-government organisations (NGOs), the ASGC links no- and low-fee schools with existing programmes and provides strategic support to improve the quality of after-school programmes in the province. The ASGC programme has engaged existing after-school programmes through a series of consultations that brought together school principals, teachers and NGOs as well as government departments in order to better understand how each after-school programme is implemented.

The ASGC comprises a small team, each responsible for coordination at different levels and across sectors in the province

In addition, the ASGC created several sharing and learning platforms to allow networking between programmes and schools, and supported networking opportunities through an accessible online platform, ‘Edu-collaborate’.<sup>22</sup> These purposeful engagements have enabled the extension of sport, arts and academic support to learners.

The prioritisation of good quality programmes and well capacitated practitioners has seen the ASGC develop and deliver training opportunities for practitioners including an intensive expanded education programme, master’s and doctoral courses as well as training opportunities for coaches.<sup>23</sup>

From the outset the team shaping the ASGC strategy recognised the importance of coordination to prompt, manage and sustain collaboration across sectors. The ASGC comprises a small team, each responsible for coordination at different levels and across sectors in the provincial after-school environment.

For example, there is a team member responsible for coordinating capacity building opportunities for practitioners (principals and teachers) in the after-school sector, with another team member responsible for ongoing communication between the policy makers and implementing officials in each of the departments who are involved in after-school programmes. The team comprises members who are systems thinkers and have a sound understanding of the after-school sector as well as

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R238.6  
billion

ANNUAL COST OF VIOLENCE  
AGAINST CHILDREN IN SA

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experience of the environments in which each of the stakeholders – government, NGOs, academia, donors, corporates – operate.

In addition to the central coordinating team, a further layer of coordination is created for the implementation of programmes. The activities that form part of the ASGC offerings each have a designated institution (government department or organisation), whose responsibilities are clearly defined, to lead the activity.

For example, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports is responsible for the Year Beyond (YeBo) Programme which provides academic support targeting foundation phase (grades 1–4) and entry level in high schools (grades 8–10).<sup>24</sup> The ASGC coordinating team and the ‘leading’ institutions have regular email and telephonic exchanges as well as formal meetings so that progress is monitored and challenges addressed.

Activities that form part of the ASGC offerings are each led by a designated institution whose responsibilities are clearly defined

The success of working collaboratively is reflected in the ASGC’s achievements. Since the Game Changer was launched, about a third of the learners in the Western Cape registered for after-school programmes, and 40% of these learners have attended regularly and consistently. This means that more than 84 000 learners have been provided with a safe environment where their emotional, social, physical and academic skills have been strengthened, thus protecting them from engaging in risky and destructive behaviour.

The impact is that learners are helped to find their passions and hold on to dreams and hopes, which enable them to perform better. In a study on the well-being of Western Cape youth, exposure to opportunities that support the aspirations of young people were emphasised.

One participant from Tafelsig stated, ‘We get to meet people like Professor Jonathan Jansen. We get to meet all these great people. You get exposure and all you doing is, like, studying. You get to hear other people’s stories. People meet you and they want to offer you bursaries and things like that. So that’s some of the opportunities we get.’<sup>25</sup>

The expansion of certificated offerings such as the postgraduate qualification developed at Stellenbosch University, the NQF level 5 training for coaches as well as the master’s and doctoral courses developed in partnership with Stellenbosch and Rutgers Universities, contribute to professionalising the after-school sector and establishing it as a viable career path.<sup>26</sup>

The ASGC is one example of what is possible even when confronted with realities that appear debilitating. The innovative, collaborative engagements

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84 000

LEARNERS IN  
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demonstrated with the ASGC yield some critical lessons for stakeholders keen to replicate such a violence prevention initiative.<sup>27</sup>

One key lesson pertains to coordination. To be effective, the following is required:

- A skilled team whose members understand their roles and responsibilities and how they individually contribute to the overall strategic vision.
- The coordinating team should have the capacity to respond to changes and to information, including finding ways to support the sustained involvement of learners and practitioners.
- The ability to identify ‘unusual partners’ who can enable new ways of seeing the issue.
- The ability to see beyond narrow policy objectives and connect policy priorities for education, health, community safety, sport and the environment to sustain engagement.
- Authority to influence. The coordination team needs to be located where it can have influence over decisions and contribute to shaping discussions and plans.
- The team needs to be able to identify, initiate and sustain opportunities for building momentum.
- Finances have to be available to support the work of the coordinating team.

Postgraduate qualifications and certified training for coaches help professionalise the after-school sector and establish it as a viable career path

Another key lesson relates to partnerships. Strong, clear partnerships between government departments, implementing institutions and community members or groups must be established. The coordinating team has the responsibility for establishing and fostering partnerships. This is especially the case since context-specific knowledge resides with those directly affected (living or working in the community where the programme is implemented) and with those working in the after-school sector such as coaches, tutors and teachers who implement the arts, sport and academic programmes.

### **Powerful champions and customised interventions**

Implementing violence prevention interventions that require many different partners such as teachers, principals, parents, organisations and several government departments (Department of Education, Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport) is not without challenges. Obtaining buy-in of all these stakeholders, especially teachers, parents and learners, is essential.



LOCAL CHAMPIONS ARE  
KEY TO SUCCESS

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In a 2002 paper on the WHO *World report on violence and health*, Krug et al observe that communities are commonly seen as fulfilling a central role in violence prevention, determining how best to solve their problems. Therefore, it is imperative to identify local champions who are passionate about the intervention. The acknowledgement that communities have to take charge of the way local problems are addressed recognises that no single solution can be applied to address violence, but rather tailored responses that are cognisant of the context have to be shaped.

The success of the ASGC echoes the importance of champions, ownership and customised interventions. For the ISS case study on the ASGC,<sup>28</sup> interviews were conducted with representatives from both the ASGC coordinating team and the stakeholders in the sector.

### The ASGC's achievements inspire others in the Western Cape who are located in areas where after-school programming is limited

They identified that buy-in to the ASGC was a consequence of the approach taken by ASGC coordinating team. The team saw and acknowledged that there are existing activities within a community, understood that the community and/or stakeholders are the drivers and leaders of these activities, and that activities would differ according to what is available and applicable for each community.

The gains of the ASGC serve as a source of inspiration for others in the Western Cape who are located in areas where after-school programming is limited. In the SAPS Eden Cluster, for example, the police have spearheaded a process to facilitate inter-sectoral collaboration within four local areas – Dysseisdorp, Knysna, Conville and Thembaletu – in order to stimulate interventions to keep youth safe.

At a workshop in the latter part of June 2019, the stakeholders from these areas – teachers, principals, police officers, religious leaders and representatives from NGOs – expressed concern about truancy, substance abuse and the lack of supervised care for young people at the end of the school day. Through a facilitated process, groups from each area developed plans to start violence prevention interventions in their communities.

The initiative within the Eden SAPS Cluster has demonstrated the power of influential champions, such as the Eden SAPS cluster commander, who understands that policing alone cannot prevent children from experiencing violence, or keep them safe.

Having experienced NGOs like the Seven Passes Initiative in the area, the support of the provincial After School Programme office and Chrysalis



THE DEPARTMENT OF  
BASIC EDUCATION IS WELL  
PLACED TO LEAD VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION ACTIONS

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Academy and the support of principles, religious leaders, community-policing forums makes local innovation possible. This development is in its infancy in the Eden District but the existence of champions and local level ownership is a positive and promising start for 'growing' interventions to prevent violence.<sup>29</sup>

## Recommendations

South Africa is a Pathfinder country of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. Government departments, NGOs, researchers and development partners are committed to implementing the seven evidence-informed INSPIRE strategies.<sup>30</sup> Creating safe environments and providing education and life skills are two of the strategies that are particularly important for preventing violence.

Holistic approaches are needed that go beyond supporting Community Policing Forums

The Department of Basic Education is well positioned to lead and promote actions to prevent violence:

- The Department of Basic Education at provincial level must engage the teacher unions and school governing bodies, parents and learners to work towards the provision of after-school programmes

at all public schools, targeting those low- and no-fee schools.

- The Department of Basic Education at national level must require provincial departments to work with stakeholders delivering after-school programmes in order to monitor the impact of these programmes in the province.

In the Western Cape:

- The Department of Culture, Arts and Sport must support the expansion learners opportunities to develop as whole children.
- Department of Community Safety must ensure that they employ a holistic approach to violence reduction that goes beyond supporting Community Policing Forums.

Given the existing innovations in the country to prevent violence, such as the ASGC, and the developments within the Eden District:

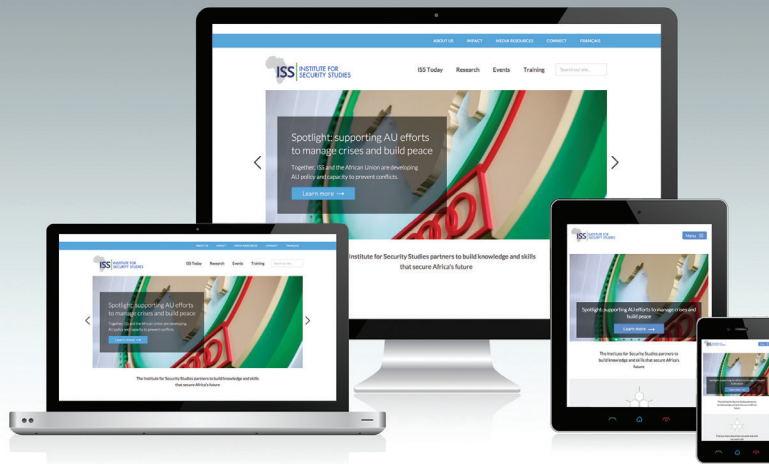
- Participating departments, NGOs and researchers should ensure that their interventions have a theory of change, a well considered data plan and a communications strategy to share their results.
- Participating departments, NGOs and researchers should prioritise the rigorous monitoring of these interventions so that we continue to deepen our understanding of how to sustain inter-sectoral collaboration and generate evidence on the impact of violence prevention initiatives.

## Notes

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