

***Systemic approaches and collaborative action
for realizing community safety-experiences
from South Africa***

by

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“In 2030, people living in South Africa feel safe at home, at school and at work, and they enjoy a community life free of fear. Women walk freely in the streets and children play safely outside. The police service is well-resourced and professional, staffed by highly skilled officers who value their work, serve the community, safeguard lives and property without discrimination, protect the peaceful against violence, and respect the rights of all to equality and justice.”¹

This is the ambitious vision for safer communities in South Africa in 2030, as laid out in the country’s recently released National Development Plan. The plan “recognizes that achieving long-term, sustainable safety requires an integrated approach focused on tackling the fundamental causes of criminality. This requires mobilizing a wider range of state and non-state capacities and resources at all levels and active citizen’s involvement and co-responsibility.”²

This article looks at some of the challenges and opportunities regarding integrated approaches to community safety in South Africa and provides snapshots of three existing initiatives³ that attempt to give expression to the more systemic, multi-stakeholder and collaborative approaches called for in the National Development Plan. These examples were presented by a South African delegation to the German Congress on Crime Prevention Annual International Forum in Munich in April 2012, which formed part of a study tour led by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Although they are not intended to present a collective approach the case studies give a glimpse into what is being done at different levels. The article also offers some perspectives on the potential for the concept of integrated approaches and demands that such promising practices are more widely disseminated and replicated, which is one of the primary goals of the Inclusive Violence Prevention Programme implemented by GIZ on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

¹ National Planning Commission South Africa: National Development Plan: Vision for 2030. (P. 349 – 363). 2011.

² See above

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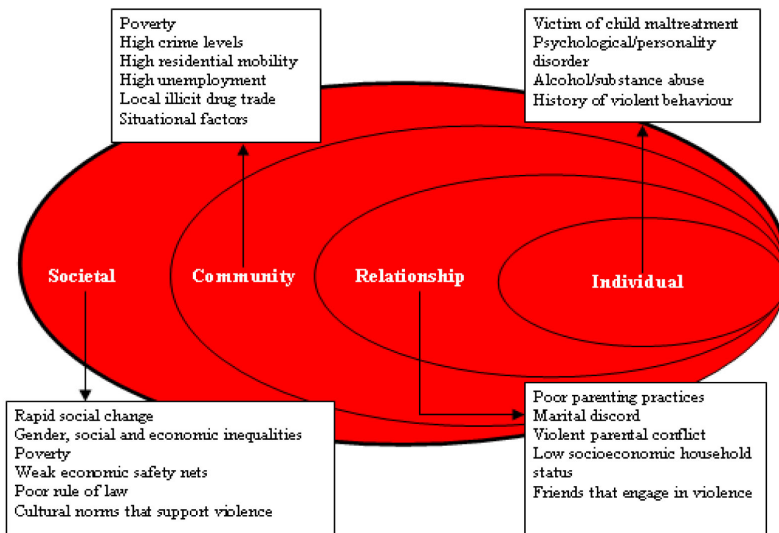
Understanding violence

The drivers of crime and violence are varied and complex, and are invariably intricately connected to specific local circumstances. However, there are a number of trends that are globally conducive to crime and violence. One is the rapid pace of urbanization, which presents huge challenges for the populations living in many urban areas. For the first time ever, more than half of the world's population lives in towns and cities. In South Africa, more than half of the population currently lives and works in urban areas, which are continuing to grow. With this dramatic shift come enormous problems of social inequality, unemployment and urban poverty that are most visible in communities lacking access to basic services such as health, quality education, housing or decent work. Many of South Africa's urban areas are insufficiently equipped to cope with rapid urbanization, especially the large township areas, a problematic legacy of Apartheid planning, that typically lack adequate infrastructure and services. In many cases high levels of discontent and anger with lacking basic services are the results, which in turn increase the likelihood of crime and violent behaviour.

However, given that the phenomenon of violence is a more complex issue that results from the interplay of a multitude of different factors, there is no single reason that sufficiently explains why some individuals behave violently towards others or why violence is more prevalent in some communities than in others. The ecological model developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) offers a very useful description of the multifaceted nature of violence. WHO differentiates between risk factors occurring at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels, which influence young people⁴ in particular and affect their vulnerability to violent behaviour:

⁴ Drawing on the global wealth of experience and academic insights, GIZ developed a practice-oriented model which is intended to assist in the planning of complex crime and violence prevention interventions. GIZ's systemic approach focuses particularly on youth violence, given that young people under the age of 25 – typically the majority of the population in developing countries – are affected disproportionately by all types of violence. Logically, that means that involving young people is a crucial part in finding effective answers to achieving safety as is the involvement of those actors that have an influence on the behaviour of young people such as parents, teachers, social workers, etc. The GIZ systemic model is implemented through a workshop approach, which is elaborated in the "Handbook on the systemic prevention of youth violence." With interactive exercises, the workshop concept guides practitioners through a series of easy steps to plan for behavioural change among young people and relevant key actors. It helps in analyzing the context-specific causes and extent of youth violence as well as the life situation of young people. In this way prevention measures can be tailored according to the local context.
<http://www.giz.de/Themen/de/31724.htm>

The ecological model:⁵



The WHO model not only helps to differentiate between the many and varied influencing factors behind violence and shows the relationships between individuals and their complex environment, but it also demonstrates the value and importance of collaborative action including various sectors and several levels in order to prevent violence. In South Africa, as much as in other violence hotspots around the world, where a whole variety of factors (enormous income disparities, poverty, social exclusion etc.) contribute to a fragile social system, it is all the more important to put an emphasis on systemic and inclusive approaches.

Crime and violence in South Africa

With approximately two million serious incidents of violent crime recorded every year, South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence in the world. Particularly striking in the South African context is the violent nature of crime. In multiple ways, crime and violence constantly undermine possibilities for the improvement of living conditions for most South Africans, impact negatively on people's ability to partake in social and economic life and erode citizens' trust in the state's capacity to provide safety as a public good.

⁵ WHO,
<http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/ecology/en/index.html>

The root causes for this situation in the country are to be found in the legacy of the Apartheid system, which created physical (informal settlements, townships, homelands) and social disadvantages and exclusion for the great majority of the population. The often violent character of the conflict between the forces of liberation and the state has left an indelible mark on the nation's collective psyche that still has to be surmounted. Some commentators consequently refer to a "culture of violence" that pervades the society. Despite impressive developmental achievements since the transition to democracy eighteen years ago, intractable problems persist. According to the Gini coefficient, inequality has grown since the end of Apartheid, and the gap between rich and poor continues to be among the world's largest. High unemployment rates (officially around 25,5% of the economically active population is unemployed⁶) most acutely affect young people who constitute the majority of the population. Using the country's official definition of youth (15 to 35 years), about 34.5% of young people are currently unemployed. Of those who have jobs, a third earn less than \$2 a day⁷. A generally poor education system (according to the World Economic Forum, South Africa ranks 132nd out of 144 countries for its primary education and 143rd in science and mathematics⁸) in combination with the break-down of family and community support structures in many areas have left too many young people with few perspectives and opportunities for personal growth and development. Further contributors to high rates of crime and violence are social norms that legitimise the use of violence, weak law enforcement as well as the continued social, economic and political marginalisation of women.

Responses to crime and violence

Since 1994, South Africa has put in place a host of progressive legislation, policies and structures at various levels to promote and enable more holistic and systemic approaches to creating safer communities. Among them are the 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy and the 1998 White Paper on Safety and Security. More recently, the government has committed to the objective that '*all people in South Africa are and feel safe*' as one of its highest priorities. South Africa also has a relatively large and vibrant civil society sector, which has yielded a number of innovative interventions that address public safety in a holistic manner.

At the same time, in contradiction to official policy stances, there has been the tendency within government over the past decade to pursue a hard-line law-enforcement approach to crime and violence prevention, manifested for example in the re-militarisation of the police. This has served to undermine the focus on social crime prevention and more systemic approaches, which remain at the core of the solution to the problems of crime and violence facing the country.

⁶ <http://www.statssa.gov.za/keyindicators/keyindicators.asp>

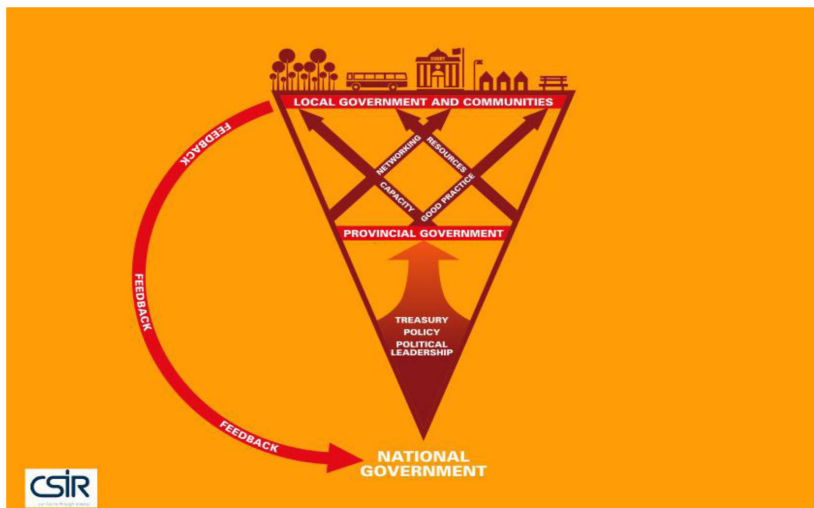
⁷ The Economist: Sad South Africa. October 2012, from the print edition

⁸ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2012-13.pdf

The following three different case studies of interventions and methodologies illustrate the potential of collaborative action and systemic thinking in South Africa. These individual case studies represent only a small selection of what is being done at different levels and are not intended to present a collective approach. They are hugely varied in terms of the communities they involve and the complexities they are faced with. However, they all have in common that they take a systemic look at community safety.

Case study 1: Transforming fragile social systems- one community at a time

The Social Transformation System methodology developed by Dr. Barbara Holtmann aims to facilitate sustainable community safety, mobilizing key stakeholders in productive collaborations and to pave the way for more inclusive approaches. The methodology focuses on pro-social behaviour and community cohesion, delivering an optimistic vision rather than one based on fear of crime and violence. It is a methodology for local intervention by local actors. Acknowledging the need for practical solutions and local ownership, it recognizes that communities need to design and find their own destinies and collaborate with government and other stakeholders, such as donors, to build the protective layers that lead to resilience and more safety.



The need for local solutions: The “Upside-down three tiers of government” –model by Dr. Holtmann puts local government (and thus the people of South Africa) at the top of the inverted pyramid. In this model national government provides political leadership and guidance through policy and a legislative framework. The provincial level acts as an intermediate level which offers support, capacity building and guidance to local actors. The focus lies on the empowerment at the local level, where crime and violence are experienced most tangibly.

The methodology is applied in workshops which Dr. Holtmann conducts with institutions, service providers and communities all over South Africa. In the workshops participants are facilitated to use right brain thinking and intuitive knowledge to imagine the whole system in a transformed state, regardless of their individual mandates, interests or ability to influence parts of that system. The question then is, based on a shared understanding of the current flawed system, “what does it look like when it’s fixed”? The jointly developed vision of “what it looks like when its fixed” acts as a benchmark against which the reality is then assessed and scored (indicators are scored on a four point scale - 4 is the ideal scenario; what it looks like when it’s fixed, 3 is good, 2 is bad and 1 is terrible). This enables participants to rapidly evaluate the current status of the flawed system against their vision of the transformed system and provides essential insights into what needs to be done to fix it. The model demands that stakeholders each understand their usefulness to the transformation process and the supporting software programme also enables presentation of an individual stakeholder view, where only the elements to which a particular stakeholder are linked, are visible. This allows a stakeholder to manage collaborative partnerships, focusing on relationships of mutual inter-dependence.

During the interventions and implementation of various projects, participants can use the software system and input data they collect as part of their work. The software then acts as a live data feed, where participants can log on and assess areas of weakness or strength, in relation to the greater system. This also helps to measure impact over time and illustrates how the system as a whole moves towards transformation as a consequence of targeted collaborative actions.



What it looks like when it's fixed - the safe community of opportunity model by Dr. Barbara Holtmann

The model requires individual and collective accountability; it highlights inter-dependence and offers pragmatic motivations for partnership and integrated approaches. It provides also a platform for joint planning and the development of inclusive strategies and is thus also a useful example of how systemic approaches can be very pragmatically translated into concrete preventative interventions that speak to the challenges in the communities. This methodology was for instance applied within the development process of a local crime prevention strategy for the Central Karoo District Municipality, a rural and largely deprived region in South Africa. The research team began by asking people to imagine 'what it looks like when it's fixed'. In groups of varying composition, participants were asked to paint or draw images of a safe Central Karoo. From the elements that made up the images, they identified the key activists and actions that would be required to achieve a safe community and build sustainable resilience.

Case study 2: Johannesburg's City Safety Programme

The local level is the level where government, civil society, the business community and citizens interact most tangibly, which implies there are ample opportunities for citizen's participation and inclusive approaches. The role of local/city government in

South Africa directly in crime prevention is limited. However, within their legislated mandate, municipalities are able to invest in public safety through interventions such as community development, urban design and management, protection of vulnerable groups, infrastructure upgrades and by-law enforcement. These all require a high level of collaboration between municipal departments and other actors. The potential of such integrated approaches on the city/local level is demonstrated by a number of success stories in South Africa, one of which is the “Jo’burg City Safety Programme” (JCSP).

Johannesburg has a reputation as one of the world’s most violent cities. The establishment of the JCSP was triggered by the urgent need for more of the city’s departments to better understand their roles and to assume responsibility with respect to enhancing safety in the city. Through the programme, safety promotion and crime prevention are tackled from a variety of standpoints by a larger pool of role-players, thus addressing the problem more quickly and effectively. The JCSP has successfully pioneered a new and innovative way to address crime by moving away from the prevailing “silo” mentality to an integrated way of working in the public sector. The programme provides the platform for all the city role-players in a particular focal area to meet regularly with the South African Police Service (SAPS) and other provincial role-players, to discuss ways in which their work impacts on each others’ work and on overall safety aspects. In so doing, city departments, enforcement agencies and municipal-owned entities are able to develop joint solutions to safety challenges. The programme has also developed the capacity of city departments to proactively consider topics such as urban safety/service delivery problems that impact on public safety in the city.

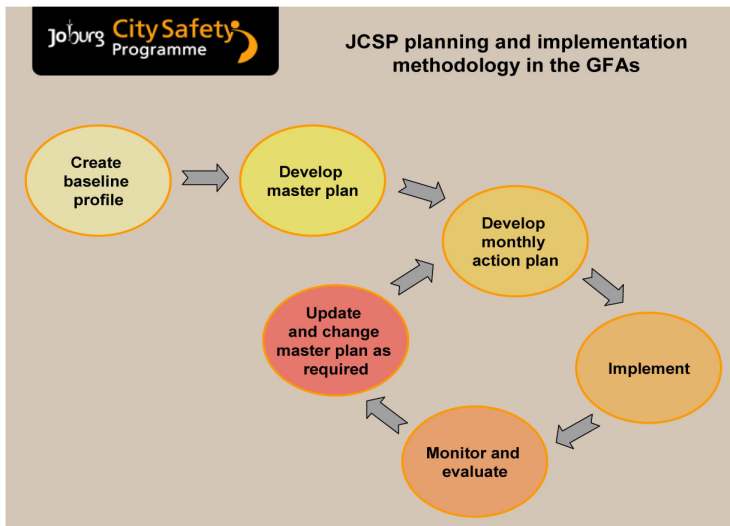


Figure 1 : JCSP Methodology

Another factor that contributed greatly to the success of the JCSP was that the programme deliberately sought to improve the coordination with provincial role-players to increase leverage. This is absolutely vital to creating more holistic programmes as all three spheres of government (local, provincial, national) have differing but complementary roles and responsibilities in the creation of safer cities and communities. Unfortunately, the lack of collaboration between the different levels of government is also one of the persistent challenges in South Africa, which makes it sometimes difficult to ensure stringent policy implementation and effective service delivery at the local level. Since its introduction, the JCSP has contributed to significant decreases in crime and violence in Johannesburg. For example, between 2003 and 2011, the number of murders has decreased by 30%, attempted murders by 50% and contact crimes by 27%.

Lessons Learned from the JCSP

- Strong support from the local government political leadership is a precondition;
- Interdepartmental understanding of their role in urban safety is essential;
- Holistic approach to issues of safety at city level is an essential ingredient to drive and orient crime-prevention initiatives
- Inter and intra-departmental cooperation and coordination is paramount

Case study 3: The provincial Department of Community Safety in the Western Cape Province

One of the provinces in South Africa that provides a good example of what can be achieved through coordinated and collaborative approaches is the Western Cape. With the introduction of the provincial Transversal Management System the Western Cape government is proactively tackling the problem of different departments all operating in isolation, not communicating with each other and often working within the same communities unaware of the others' programmes and action plans. In the past this resulted in a fragmented state of affairs and a duplication of efforts, to the detriment of service delivery. The new governance model that has been introduced is now more customized for the particular needs of the people of the Western Cape. The provincial Transversal Management System is designed to achieve measurable outcomes for target communities, through a focus on sectors rather than singular departments. In other words, sectoral clusters address issues transversally while line departments become the implementing agents. One strategic key issue that is being addressed within the sectoral clusters is how to increase safety.

The Western Cape Provincial Government's Department of Community Safety has long embraced integrated and holistic approaches to crime prevention and safety, based on the recognition that crime cannot be addressed through law enforcement alone. It has thus formulated the strategic goal "*to make every community in the province a safe place in which to live, work, learn, relax and move about.*"

One of the main pillars of the department's safety strategy is to establish civilian oversight mechanisms for policing in the province. This is being done due to the fact that despite a clear oversight and monitoring mandate in respect of South African Police Service (SAPS) activities and functions within their area of jurisdiction, provinces have not done enough to develop and implement systematic and sustainable oversight or monitoring mechanisms. Functions normally associated with effective oversight, such as the independent collection of data, the regular evaluation of performance at station level and the development of measurable performance standards are not being sufficiently implemented, despite provinces having a clear mandate to do so. In an effort to addressing this issue, the Western Cape Government drafted the Community Safety Bill, currently put out for public comment. The main focus of the Bill is to clarify and articulate the powers, functions and duties of the provincial government as it relates to overseeing policing. It also sets out to create systems of integrated safety information that is partly based on innovative ways to collect data, such as participatory safety audits, as opposed to total reliance on crime statistics. In addition, it intends to institutionalize a system that draws information from morbidity and non-fatal injury data. The rationale for this is based on the understanding that crime statistics often remain a poor indicator of safety and that a more comprehensive information base is needed when considering safety needs.

A further important pillar of the Western Cape's crime prevention strategy is the creation of partnerships. In support of an inclusive "whole of society" approach and in recognizing that safety cannot be achieved without an integrated approach, the province aims to set-up and strengthen existing partnerships with various role-players, including but not limited to business, NGOs and other organs of civil society. The establishment of a partnership entity outside of government, which is aimed at creating an "*incubator*" capacity, is envisaged. One of the main purposes of the envisaged entity will be to identify programmes and projects which add maximum value to increasing safety in the Western Cape, thereby creating opportunities for enhanced collaboration and joint action. Along this line, the so-called provincial Transversal Management System has created institutionalized, cross-departmental working groups under its strategic objectives on selected issues such as injury prevention, safety or criminality and gangs.

Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention- GIZ's contribution in South Africa

Despite innovative initiatives and interventions such as the three presented case studies, South Africa's response to the country's inclination towards violence and crime has in recent years been largely dominated by a rigid law enforcement approach. The necessary shift from a security-based approach to a notion of safety⁹ is only slowly gaining traction. However, with the new vision for community safety contained in the National Development Plan, the prospect now exists for a renewed government commitment to a broader, systemic approach to safety, as originally envisaged in the 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy.

Among the key challenges to be dealt with is the struggling culture of collaboration across sectors, institutions as well as between public-, civil society- and community-based organisations in their attempts at preventing violence and increasing the safety of citizens. There are also insufficient opportunities for sharing knowledge, skills and experience between multiple disciplines such as urban development, youth- and social work, economic empowerment, preventive police work and community policing, to name but a few. Lastly, few avenues exist for further training and skills building for violence and crime prevention across the range of relevant sectors, and the majority of government programmes and processes have yet to integrate a safety lens.

Against this backdrop, German Development Cooperation (GIZ) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and with local partners, is currently implementing the "Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention for Safe Public Spaces (VCP)" programme as part of its overall support in the area of governance and administration in South Africa. Drawing on GIZ's systemic approach to violence prevention, the project specifically aims to enable governmental and non-governmental actors to jointly develop and implement innovative measures that increase the safety of residents, particularly young people, in selected sites. Further, it addresses the implementation challenge of South Africa's progressive national policies at the level local governance. Part of this is to support local government to realise its role in creating an enabling environment for the co-production of safer communities, based on the notion of safety as a public good. Another aspect of the programme is to provide more opportunities for different professional groups to get further training in violence prevention and to create platforms for knowledge sharing and networking, so that all the good local initiatives that exist in the country can learn from and infuse each other.

Conclusion

The different initiatives discussed in this paper, although quite different in their nature and scope, point in the same direction, highlighting that change is possible but

⁹ "security"- protection against a perceived or known threat
"safety" - absence of threat and fear

inevitably depends on change, a change that enables more collaborative and holistic approaches. The cases illustrate that a safer South Africa is achievable, where actors understand their respective mandates and combine them in joint safety approaches.

The manner in which the Provincial Government of the Western Cape as well as the Jo'burg City Safety Programme are addressing the challenges of crime and violence within their territory provide promising examples for other provinces and cities to learn from. They both demonstrate that comprehensive approaches that look at the root causes of violence, rather than purely focusing on the symptoms, are a cost-effective, sustainable and sensible way forward when it comes to creating safety. Models and practical applications such as Barbara Holtmanns Social Transformation System can assist governmental and non-governmental actors to face the often overwhelmingly complex challenges in the creation of safer environments and add value to their interventions through providing a foundation on which to plan for change. Change on the scale required by a society suffering broad and deep vulnerability cannot be achieved through simple, linear interventions by one or a few sectors. It requires an understanding of the complexities, an appetite for true prevention, inclusive collaboration and a shared sense of purpose to transform the fragility and vulnerability into sustainable resilience.

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