

# The **Violence** **Prevention** Forum

Evidence | Collaboration | Trust



The Western Cape  
Violence Prevention  
Forum 7<sup>th</sup> meeting

18 September 2023

“Let us not wait for the next crisis”  
– Violence is preventable

Reflections from leaders on  
the August 2023 taxi stay-away

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“The impact of the taxi stay-away spread beyond our imagination. The protest affected communities, workspaces, small businesses, families, women and children”

– Participant

“The insecurities faced by communities are mounting. In August, it was the taxi stay-away that lit the fire, but tomorrow, it could be something else. Let us not wait for the next crisis, violence is preventable”

– Participant



# Summary

On 18 September 2023, the Western Cape Violence Prevention Forum (WC VPF) held its 7<sup>th</sup> meeting in Cape Town at [MOSAIC](#), an NGO that aims to prevent and reduce abuse and domestic violence by providing holistic, integrated services for healing and empowerment. The past three WC VPF meetings have been held at an NGO office and an activist hub, instead of hotels. This has been done with the intention of grounding the discussions in the realities of the most vulnerable people and communities.

The meeting was attended by 36 leaders from different sectors, including government, civil society, research and business. There had been tragic incidents in the province since the Forum's last meeting on 4 May 2023, involving a taxi stay-away that affected commuters, communities and families. Although the dust had settled by September, the impact of the stay-away on communities, institutions and individuals remained.

The taxi stay-away demonstrated how the Apartheid legacy, coupled with current leadership challenges and persistent economic exclusion, continued to undermine South Africa's development and efforts to build an inclusive and peaceful society.

The WC VPF meeting focused on deepening the forum's collective actions that could be taken to help prevent violence in the future.

Leaders left the meeting feeling heard, hopeful and grateful to be in dialogue. But they were also challenged by the stories shared at the meeting.

The specific objectives of the meeting were:

- To reflect on the taxi stay-away and unpack its impact on institutions and individuals
- To identify possible next steps towards preventing another violent outbreak
- To strengthen relationships between leaders from civil society, government, research and business

The [Western Cape Violence Prevention Forum \(WC VPF\)](#) is a provincial multistakeholder platform that has been meeting twice a year since 2021 to share knowledge and practice and enable stronger partnerships between violence prevention practitioners across sectors. The Forum is convened by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). It is guided and governed by a multisectoral steering committee, and the meetings are facilitated by independent and skilled facilitators Vuyo Koyana and Antonia Porter.

WC VPF meetings are facilitated in an inclusive manner that draws on the diversity of voices and experiences. Shared agreements enable equal and constructive participation. These include: *share and be honest, be open to conversation, be present and be aware of power, accept dissenting voices, respect the process, be humble, be mindful of speaking airtime, be open to connecting with others and have fun.*

These objectives built on conversations at the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, where it was acknowledged leadership was a journey of personal mastery, and that it was crucial for leaders to be reflective as:

**“The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener”**

– Bill O'Brien

The discussions were facilitated by Vuyo Koyana and Antonia Porter.<sup>1</sup>

This report is intended to be a resource. The day's proceedings have been rearranged for ease of reference, and to highlight the key insights shared at the meeting. The tools and resources shared during the meeting are summarised throughout.

# Key messages from the discussions

The leaders from NGOs, government departments and agencies, research institutions and business discussed the taxi stay-away and the national budget cuts that had been announced by the National Treasury. The insights that emerged were:

- There was a stark difference in how colleagues experienced the protest. Those who had cars could drive home quickly, while those who relied on public transport struggled to get home. The stay-away was an example of how a workplace was not an isolated bubble but impacted by external events.
- The taxi stay-away had ripple effects on communities and staff. Although the protest had ended, the frustration about how it was handled and the fear of another crisis remained.
- The violence prevention budget must be protected in the budget cuts as communities continued to face mounting insecurities.
- The stay-away was an example of how the present challenges are interlinked with the country's past. The past must not be ignored. Safe, reliable and accessible transport is crucial to addressing the country's high inequality and achieving its development goals. Transport connects communities to services and opportunities.
- Dialogue on race and class, facilitated by skilled and independent facilitators, is a tool for building bridges and resolving conflicts within organisations and between different stakeholders. Resolving conflict non-violently is an integral part of preventing violent outbreaks. Therefore, the province must invest in its conflict resolution capacity.
- The WC VPF is a resource. The WC VPF network has diverse skills and knowledge that can and must support provincial efforts to prevent violence.
- Violence is complex, and no one actor can tackle the change alone. Preventing violence requires collaborative efforts.





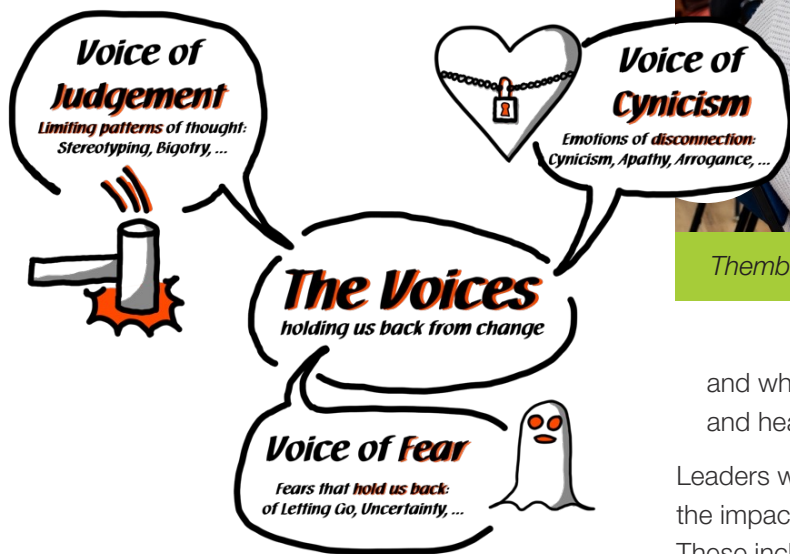
Scharmer says that when confronted with change or a challenge, leaders often have three prominent voices in their minds that hold them back from leaning into the change. These are the voices of:

- **Judgment:** Which says this is a terrible idea or approach. It blocks possibility and learning.
- **Cynicism:** Which says nothing matters, give up. It destroys connection and fosters mistrust.
- **Fear:** Which says it will all fall apart, you can't do it, you don't have time. It blocks the willingness to try.

These internal voices can prevent leaders from leaping into change or building the necessary partnerships to achieve social change. Scharmer proposes that interrogating the voices of resistance can lead to constructive and mindful dialogue and an acknowledgement and acceptance of the complexity of social challenges and the need for partnerships, which he calls the 'system seeing itself for what it is'.



Chart 2: The Voices of Resistance<sup>3</sup>



Using a present challenge, leaders were asked to reflect on their internal dialogue. Individually, they answered and shared their responses to these questions in small groups:

1. A time (past or present) that I was led by one of the internal voices.
2. Which of the voices is most familiar to me?
3. A challenge that I am currently facing, which voice is dominant in the midst of this challenge,

and where do I see myself opening my mind and heart to change?

Leaders were offered prompts to interrogate the impact of these voices and find alternatives. These included:

- **Voice of judgement:** Is this the only scenario that can happen? If not, what are other possible outcomes?
- **Voice of cynicism:** Instead of looking for a clear solution, is there a possible small step that I can take?
- **Voice of fear:** What is within my control? What is out of my control? Who are my partners in this situation?

# Unpacking violence: A case study of the taxi stay-away

On 3 August 2023, SANTACO announced the suspension of taxi services following a violent clash between taxi drivers and the metro police at the taxi rank over taxi impoundments. The suspension of services was immediate, affecting many commuters who were still at their places of work in and around the city.

Participants shared stories of what happened and how they were impacted in their organisations and departments using a tool called the 'Truth Mandala'.

This is a tool creatively applied by [Joanna Macy](#) in her book *Coming Back to Life*. Macy says that activists have to face and process the world's suffering. This can debilitate and drain one's spirit and energy, but it can also provide clarity if used constructively.

Chart 3: The Truth Mandala



The Truth Mandala consists of five objects representing emotions that arise after witnessing or experiencing a challenge or traumatic event. The objects are shown in Chart 3.

- The stick represents anger
- The stone represents fear
- The dry leaves represent sorrow and grief for something lost
- The cloth represents shame
- The bowl represents emptiness or a sense of deprivation

The Truth Mandala is used to acknowledge and reflect emotions with the intention of assisting participants to gain insight and clarity from their own stories and the stories of others. Macy points out that although the five emotions are negative, hope is at the centre and often emerges after a person has made sense of their emotions.

On the following page are some insights that emerged from the sharing.



Jody van der Heyde and Corey Johnson



Leaders remembered the eve of 3 August as chaotic. Children, the elderly, workers, and commuters struggled to return home. They recalled flashbacks of commuters stranded at taxi ranks, some walking over 30 km to get home, and the fear and worry of whether staff would reach home safely.



## Reflections from leaders – what happened on the day

“I remember walking home in Khayelitsha, and there were so many of us. It was starting to get dark, and we were all rushing and so scared. There were women, schoolchildren and aboGogo. Then I heard people screaming, followed by chaos as people scattered and started running. I turned to look and realised people were taking advantage of the commotion and robbing us. I saw them targetting grandmothers.

I remember I seeing one of the grandmothers being robbed by a young man I knew, and I could see he was about to target another grandmother walking next to me, so I just grabbed her and pretended I knew her so he could not target her. I grabbed her arm and was like, ‘Woza la Gogo’ (Come here Gogo), and she was confused at first but quickly picked up what I was doing. He saw me; he recognised me, he passed.

I was so angry... this was a kid, I knew him! I was angry at what was happening; I was angry thinking about what happened to this kid; I was angry at the leadership, the country and what was happening to us.

There was a time when being human was enough to guarantee your safety. If another human was in a crisis, you would help or protect them because they are human – that was Ubuntu. Today, your safety depends on who you know and who knows you; it’s not a given. Ubuntu has become transactional. That day, I could only save one Gogo; how many were seen as targets rather than as humans to be protected?”

– A leader emotionally recalled the night of day one of the taxi stay-away.

### The conditions that led to the crisis remain

Even though things appear back to normal, the impact of the taxi stay-away and the inequalities within organisations, departments, and communities remain.

On the day the stay-away was announced, some colleagues could drive home whilst others had to

wait in long queues or walk home, and others experienced traumatic events. The protest may be over, but the fears, trauma and divisions that unfolded in August remain at an organisational and societal level.

South Africa has a history of divisions, especially along race and class, and almost three decades into democracy, the structural, class and racial divisions still exist at the organisational, community and country levels. Black and coloured communities are still the most vulnerable in crisis. This is also visible in the spatial inequality of the city.



Vuyo Koyana



Khanyisa Zangqa

### It is possible to move beyond the anger, guilt and shame

Participants were frustrated at the limited progress to address inequality in the province, despite the investment that has been made to do so. They pointed to the parallels between how conflict was resolved

30 years ago and now: ‘communities looked like it was the 1980s: burning, frustrated at leadership, helpless; while other parts were quiet and calm’.

Those who were safe or not directly affected carried guilt and shame. As one person said: ‘I started feeling guilty about being safe, like why was I safe?’. Guilt and shame are common feelings associated with privilege. Leadership and shame expert, [Brenè Brown](#), writes about how shame and guilt are some of the big stumbling blocks for leaders across the world. In her book *Dare to Lead*, she points out that leaders often view talking about uncomfortable issues as unproductive. However, leaders can either invest a reasonable amount of time in having uncomfortable, honest discussions or risk spending even more time and resources fixing the problems created by not talking about it.

# What is happening in the ecosystem

Following the debrief, each sector gave an update on the current issues and challenges they were grappling with and opportunities for collaboration.

## GOVERNMENT

- Challenged with navigating the budget cuts, prioritising stakeholders and resources and building partnerships
- Challenged with mounting reporting and administration, specifically the introduction of mandatory reporting and how that may put survivors at risk.
- Challenged with prioritising the wellness of staff members who carry the anxiety and pressure of cuts and administration.
- A Violence Prevention Unit has been established at the Department of Health; how can the WC VPF be a resource to the unit?

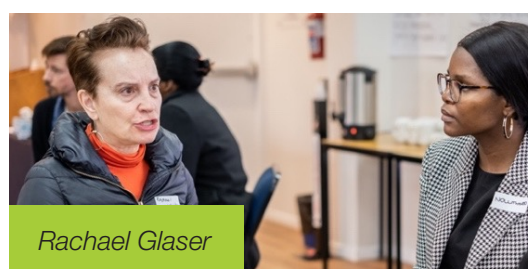


## CIVIL SOCIETY

- There is enormous concern over the budget cuts and how they will suffocate an already strained civil society. Worry about critical prevention services being the most affected.
- Civil Society Organisations have been applying a trauma-informed approach when working with clients. This has enabled organisations to better understand the root causes of challenges faced by clients.
- Civil Society has noted the need for a holistic approach to service delivery because there is a link to physical, environmental and mental health.

## RESEARCH

- The Children's Institute is looking at how research is framed and the dominant language in research; not all South Africans are first-language English speakers, so how does data collection in English impact what is captured when a survivor reports abuse?
- Ikamva Labantu is researching elderly abuse and wants to engage with the stakeholders needed to reduce violence against the elderly.
- The ISS Violence Prevention team is conducting case study research what motivates NGOs, government, and research to participate in the Forum and how their participation has impacted their work.



- The ISS Evidence-based Policing team is working with Police Stations to test if their actions achieve the desired results.

**Given the present and anticipated challenges, what can each sector do now to prevent further deterioration and insecurity? What partnerships are becoming more apparent to prevent violence?**

# Next steps

There was agreement that more must be done to unpack and discuss the impact of the taxi stay-away by provincial political leaders and taxi industry leaders and prevent the next violent outbreak.

Leaders at WC VPF proposed the following next steps:

- 1 More research is needed on the impact of the stay-away on communities, employees and vulnerable groups.
- 2 The protest showed that organisations and departments do not exist in isolation. Organisations and departments can use the stay-away as a case study to unpack the inequality and divisions witnessed on 3 August when the stay-away was announced.



*Kaathima Ebrahim lighting a candle at the start of the meeting*



*Leaders from NGOs, government, research and business checking in with each other at the beginning of the meeting*

- 3 The WC VPF must share the report and insights gathered widely. The WC VPF must be more visible to ensure that key stakeholders and sectors know it exists and is a resource – with skilled mediators, facilitators, research, practice knowledge institutions, and development partners.
- 4 The work of the WC VPF must be supported and resourced; there are limited spaces where different sectors come together and have open, honest and constructive dialogue and share knowledge and the latest evidence..
- 5 The WC VPF can expand who is represented directly and through a collation of stories; in the VPF, violence is complex and impacts many sectors and individuals.

Following the WC VPF meeting, a working group was established to look at how the VPF can contribute to preventing the next violent crisis in the province.

## NOTES

- 1 Vuyo Koyana is a leadership development expert with decades of experience in mediation and building teams and communities. Antonia Porter is a gender reconciliation and Alternatives to Violence (AVP) facilitator with decades of facilitation and mediation experience.
- 2 The bigger the word, the more times leaders reported it.
- 3 M Andonie, *Visualising the Theory U*, [https://andonie.net/project/theory\\_u](https://andonie.net/project/theory_u), 2023 (accessed 22 November 2023).



More resources can be found at:  
[www.violence-prevention.org](http://www.violence-prevention.org)





The meeting closed with a song –  
a send-off message to practitioners:

‘Shine in your corner, where you are.  
Be bright in your corner, where you are’



### **About the ISS**

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. The ISS is an African non-profit with offices in South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal. Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible policy research, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society.

### **About the Violence Prevention Forum**

The Violence Prevention Forum is a multisectoral platform for dialogue that has as its key objective the use of knowledge and evidence to prevent violence in South Africa. See [www.violence-prevention.org](http://www.violence-prevention.org).

### **Funders**

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