

‘The vision begins with me’



How are civil society, government, research and development partners

individually and **collectively**
embodying the vision

of a violence-free Western Cape,
and how can we make these efforts

more visible?

Contents

Summary.....	1	Day 2 – 30 September.....	9
Day 1 – 29 September.....	2	Reflections on the site visit.....	9
Welcoming and framing: ‘The vision begins with me’.....	2	Violence prevention efforts in the province.....	10
Setting the context: the ground on which we grow the vision.....	3	The Planet Youth Survey: new research on youth wellbeing.....	10
Professor Irvin Kinnes: What we know about gangsterism, what works and what doesn’t.....	3	Lessons from the #ThinaSonke Campaign: violence is everyone’s business.....	12
Professor Thuli Mthembu: The impact of violence on the human body.....	5	Closure and evaluation: does the vision begin with me?.....	13
Participant reflections on presentations.....	6	Appendix: Participant list.....	14
Site visit to Philisa Abafazi Bethu: violence prevention in action.....	7		



Abbreviations & acronyms



BAC	Business Against Crime
CPFs	Community Police Forums
DV and IPV	Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
SAPS	South African Police Service
VPF	Violence Prevention Forum
WC VPF/Forum	Western Cape Violence Prevention Forum

Summary

From 29–30 September 2025, the Western Cape Violence Prevention Forum (WC VPF/Forum) convened for the 11th meeting at the Novalis Ubuntu Institute in Cape Town.

In 2024, the Forum developed a vision for:

A
Western Cape where
there is **peace, freedom and joy**. A place of **mutual respect, care, love, dialogue and collaboration, across the divides** – where everyone has **equal access and opportunity to thrive, create and blossom**. A home where **all belong**

Building on the discussions from the previous year, the focus in 2025 was:

- To share research and knowledge on the drivers of violence in the Western Cape and what works to prevent violence
- To strengthen relationships and collaboration between sectors
- To embody the vision

The theme for meeting 11 was ‘The vision begins with me’, emphasising the importance of internal commitment and belief in achieving the vision. In line with the theme, the meeting question was: How are we embodying this vision in our individual and collective work, and how can we make these efforts more visible in the current context?

The Western Cape Violence Prevention Forum (WC VPF/Forum) 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 Institute for Security Studies (ISS) convenes the Forum. It is guided by a multisectoral driver group, and the meetings are facilitated by independent and skilled facilitators, Vuyo Koyana and Michael Abrams.

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: be present, share and be honest, be respectful, accept dissenting voices, be aware of power, be open to collaboration and have fun.



“The way we were together, practising mutual love, respect, peace and joy, embodied the vision. The vision is not only in the future, it is already alive today.”

– Kwakhanya Max

This report summarises the presentations, discussions, and reflections shared over the two days. It is intended as a resource for participants and leaders in the violence-prevention ecosystem. See the video report of the meeting [here](#).

Welcoming and framing: 'The vision begins with me'

The Western Cape faces high levels of violence. The long-term goal of the WC VPF is to promote the uptake and scale-up of evidence-based interventions to reduce and prevent violence.

This is achieved through sharing knowledge and research, building relationships across sectors and fostering collaboration. Violence is a complex social issue embedded in the context, history and systems where it occurs. Violence can often feel overwhelming for communities, policymakers, researchers and practitioners. However, deliberate, evidence-informed and sustained efforts can shift systems and foster safe, prosperous communities.

To set the tone for the two days, Senzekile Bengu (right) started the meeting with a story told by Kenyan politician and activist Wangari



Maathai, about a [hummingbird in a burning forest](#) that uses its seemingly small power to change an overwhelming situation.

Through this story (below), participants were prompted to reflect on how violence can feel all consuming, yet even in its enormity, there is personal, organisational and sectoral power we can harness. Each of us can choose to be the hummingbird, and to combine our individual and collective efforts, working deliberately and sustainably, to achieve the vision of a safe and prosperous Western Cape.

Be the hummingbird...

Long ago, different animals, big and small, slow and fast, lived in harmony in a beautiful forest. The animals shared the same paths, the same shade and there was plenty of food for all. The forest was divided by a big river, which cut it in two. Life was perfect. Each creature understood its place and respected the place of others. The forest was a home to all.

Until one dry afternoon, a blazing fire broke out in the forest. Flames tore through the grasslands and smoke choked the sky. Scared, the animals ran to the edge of the forest, by the river. They stood there, crying and watching the fire go on and on ... except for one, tiny animal, the hummingbird.

While the other animals stared at the fire, she flew back and forth between the fire and the river. She would dip her tiny beak into the cool water, pick up a single drop, and fly back to the flames. Every time she dropped the water, it would sizzle and disappear, and she would turn back again to get another one.

The big animals began to laugh. The elephant shook his massive head. "With my big trunk, I can carry more water than you ever will," he said. "But even I know this fire is too big. You are wasting your time." The leopard flicked his tail and paced around her. "Look at you," he sneered. "I can run faster than any creature here, but even I won't bother. You think your tiny wings will save us?" Other animals joined in – chuckling, muttering, shaking their heads.

But the hummingbird did not answer them. She did not argue. She did not defend herself. She simply kept flying from river to fire, from fire to river. The animals fell silent, watching this small, determined creature refusing to give up, each drop sizzling the fire. Finally, she paused and looked at them and said, "You may laugh, but at least I'm doing the best I can. Are you?"





Setting the context:

The ground on which we grow the vision

Gangsterism remains one of the persistent forms of violence impacting the province, especially in the Cape Flats. Between April and June 2025, **282 of the 317** gang-related murders in the country occurred in the Western Cape, making up nearly 88% of the total gang-related murders.

At the previous WC VPF meeting, there was a request to dedicate time to discussing gang violence in the Western Cape. In response, the Forum invited Professor Kinnes (pictured above, right), a researcher and expert on gang violence, to share insights on

what we know and what is needed to tackle gang violence in the province. Building on the structural drivers of violence, Professor Thuli Mthembu (above, left) then shared a reflection on the impact of violence on human relations and the body.

Professor Irvin Kinnes: What we know about gangsterism, what works and what doesn't

There have been various efforts nationally and provincially to address gang violence. But there are a few examples of effective approaches to addressing gangsterism in South Africa and elsewhere. In his input, Professor Kinnes highlighted the need to first understand the key

drivers of violence in South Africa, including gangsterism, as often this is where we get it wrong. He focused on five structural drivers worth noting: governance and policing challenges, the education crisis, homelessness, evolving gang landscapes, and ineffective gang strategies.

DRIVERS OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE IN THE WESTERN CAPE:

1

Governance and policing challenges:

Consistent failures in governance and policing have deepened the crisis of gang violence. Illegal firearms are among the drivers of gang violence. Gang influence over essential law enforcement agencies has created an environment of lawlessness and eroded public trust. A critical review of the South African Police Service (SAPS) Act and Community Police Forums (CPFs) is needed to enhance their effectiveness and credibility.

2

Education crisis:

The education crisis significantly fuels crime, with school dropout rates between Grades 7 and 12 at **three to nine percent** and a throughput rate of only 62%. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, resulting in nearly **19 000** dropouts. Many schools have become unsafe spaces where teachers face gang-related extortion, undermining education's stabilising influence and turning schools into recruitment grounds for criminal networks.



3

Homelessness:

Homelessness remains a critical, yet overlooked, driver of crime. An estimated 14 357 individuals live on Cape Town's streets, despite over R744 million spent annually on homelessness interventions. These efforts are often fragmented and insufficiently coordinated. People living in the streets face disproportionately high arrest rates and unmet health needs, while the housing backlog of 400 000 units perpetuates marginalisation, poverty and criminalisation.

4

Evolving gang landscapes:

The gang landscape in the Western Cape has shifted from the dominance of traditional 'Big Four' gangs to the emergence of new groups, such as the Fancy Boys, who engage in local extortion and violent tactics to exert control. Understanding these new dynamics and their underlying economic drivers is essential to developing effective interventions.

5

Ineffective crime prevention strategies:

Existing crime prevention strategies, including the Western Cape Provincial Safety Plan, have made some progress, but are still not enough to tackle the structural roots of violence. The 'boots-on-the-ground' approach, while valuable for immediate response, lacks the holistic vision necessary to dismantle the cycles of violence effectively.

The highlighted drivers show that gangsterism is a complex and evolving issue, with no single solution. Professor Kinnes called for a reevaluation of strategies to ensure they do not inadvertently reinforce the very structures they intend to dismantle, and made the following recommendation to do so.

Recommendations for effective crime prevention

Where strategies often go wrong is in misdiagnosing the problem and treating gangsterism as mainly a law enforcement issue, rather than a social problem. The focus is primarily on law enforcement responses rather than on preventive measures to protect youth and families at risk.

To effectively address these structural drivers, Professor Kinnes recommended a proactive, inclusive approach that focuses on the following key stakeholders:

- **Youth leadership development:** Invest in leadership training for young people in gang-

affected communities to promote resilience and positive community engagement.

- **Private sector involvement:** Encourage business initiatives like Business Against Crime (BAC) to create employment opportunities for youth.
- **Educational reforms:** Enhance school safety and retention through improved support systems.
- **Community policing revisions:** Restore community trust in law enforcement through reforms to CPFs and stronger partnerships between residents and law enforcement.
- **Firearm control initiatives:** Prioritising measures to curb the circulation of illegal firearms in high-risk areas.

By addressing these structural drivers and strengthening collaborative, evidence-based prevention strategies, the Western Cape can move closer to realising its vision of a safer, more inclusive and prosperous future.

Professor Thuli Mthembu: The impact of violence on the human body

Professor Thuli Mthembu explored the profound effects of violence on the human body, relationships, and social systems, and highlighted what is required to break cycles of violence from the perspective of occupational therapy.

Violence threatens the lives, overburdens health systems and hinders social and economic

development. Beyond fatalities, non-fatal violence leads to injuries, mental health challenges and societal disruption. Those in low and middle-income countries are particularly vulnerable.

Violence produces both physical and psychological trauma. Professor Mthembu highlighted the following impacts in Chart 1.

Chart 1: The impact of violence

Impact of violence on the body	Impact of violence human relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impaired mobility: physical injuries can range from bruises and fractures to long-term disabilities. May limit a person's engagement in daily activities, reducing independence. • Decreased mental health: psychological effects include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression. They can hinder motivation and self-efficacy, and participation in society. • Disruption of occupational roles: violence can interfere with an individual's role in families, communities and workplaces, leading to a diminished sense of purpose and belonging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation: survivors may withdraw from social interactions due to stigma or fear of retaliation, weakening community ties. • Distrust: trauma can foster suspicion among community members, undermining social cohesion. • Absenteeism in families: the absence of caregivers or parental figures such as fathers, can exacerbate neglect and perpetuate cycles of violence.

Source: adapted from Professor Thuli Mthembu's input

Chart 1 shows that the ripple effect of violence extends beyond the individual, straining relationships and weakening communities. Trauma, fear and mistrust can perpetuate cycles of violence across generations.

Breaking the cycles of violence

Addressing the systematic nature of violence requires a collaborative, multifaceted approach involving community leaders, health care professionals, and residents. Professor Mthembu emphasised several strategies:

- **Community engagement:** Develop programmes that build trust, foster a sense of belonging and strengthen social support networks through local organisations and faith-based groups.
- **Education and awareness:** Promote conflict resolution and empathy-building programmes, particularly for young people, to reshape social norms around aggression and masculinity.
- **Support systems:** Provide accessible mental health services to help individuals process trauma.

Occupational therapists can play a crucial role in rehabilitation and reintegration, assisting individuals in rebuilding their lives and restoring their sense of identity.

- **Family-centred interventions:** Implement interventions that address familial dynamics, emphasising the role of nurturing relationships in preventing intergenerational cycles of violence.
- **Holistic framework:** Embrace the principles of *being, belonging, becoming* and *doing*, to guide personal and community transformation. Fostering resilience, empowerment and social connection. These principles can facilitate a culture where individuals feel valued, supported and empowered to change their circumstances.

By acknowledging both the physical and relational impact of violence, communities can work together to break destructive cycles and foster a healthier, safer and more supportive environment that fosters growth and a sense of belonging.

Participant reflections on presentations

The presentations were followed by a discussion in which participants could share what they were observing in their contexts. The following insights were shared:



Homes and schools are key spaces for nurturing children and breaking cycles of violence: the statement 'education starts at home' resonated deeply with participants, highlighting how supportive, loving environments foster resilience, self-worth and strong identities in children.



The need for urgency and inclusion: participants were particularly moved by the quote, *'the child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.'* This captured the urgency of the issue. Children that feel unseen and silenced will go to extreme measures to be heard. The government must prioritise an urgent response, with inclusive violence prevention strategies that involve community and civil society voices, not as consultants but as partners.



Gangsterism is more than a law enforcement issue: violence is a complex social issue linked to broader factors such as poverty, unemployment, harmful gender norms and a history of violence from early childhood. Addressing violence, including gangsterism, requires a whole-of-society approach, involving schools, parents and investment in transforming communities into nurturing and safe environments.



Well-facilitated dialogue can prevent violence: there was a shared understanding of the importance of creating safe spaces for boys and men to express vulnerability, share their experiences, and find constructive ways to deal with anger and frustration. These dialogues, when well-facilitated, are essential for shifting from cycles of harm to processes of healing.



We heal individually and in community: the levels of trauma in communities are intergenerational, and to address them we need holistic trauma-informed approaches implemented at home, in schools and in communities. Promoting the kind of values – kindness, respect, empathy – that we want to see in society is also part of preventing violence.





Site visit to Philisa Abafazi Bethu: Violence prevention in action

We concluded the first day of the meeting with a site visit to [Philisa Abafazi Bethu](#), a gender-based violence organisation based in Steenberg. The name translates to ‘heal our women’. The purpose of the visit was to deepen our understanding of community-based violence prevention interventions. Philisa Abafazi Bethu is a fitting example of a seed planted into community soil that has blossomed into a beautiful lavender flower.

‘We are bringing lavender back to the hills’

– Lucinda Evans

Philisa Abafazi Bethu started as a grassroots initiative founded by Lucinda Evans in her living room in 2008, after she saw a crowd gathering around a man beating his wife in the street, which moved her to act. Today, it is a registered NGO with a Women and Family Centre in Steenberg, where it provides women and children with development programmes, such as after-school care, women’s empowerment initiatives and a men’s café. It also has a safehouse for women, children and the LGBTQIA+ community.

While the community where Philisa Abafazi Bethu was born is called Lavender Hill, fields of blooming flowers are far from sight in this struggling area. Like many other communities and townships on the Cape Flats, Lavender Hill was established under the Group Areas Act of 1950 during apartheid. The community faces various challenges, including gang violence, unemployment and substance abuse.

The Women and Family Centre stands out as a bright flower in the community, offering hope and strength to women and children, and bringing lavender back to the hills.

Steenberg faces high levels of violence. Between 40% and 60% of crime on the Cape Peninsula is gang-related, and the violence mainly targets the most vulnerable: women, children, the elderly and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The organisation has been intentional in building programmes and relationships that are needed to address violence against women, children and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Participants visited the women and children’s safe house, which provides immediate rescue and safety planning for victims of gender-based violence (GBV), working closely with the police, as well as the Philisa Abafazi Bethu Women and Family Centre, where the organisation is building an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centre. The tour was led by the founder and director, Lucinda Evans. During the tour and discussions, she highlighted the following and shared lessons that they have learned:

- Problems in communities are mounting: The community faces multiple levels of adversity, including high levels of violence, high unemployment, food insecurity, and substance abuse. Given the scale of challenges, NGOs must go beyond their budgeted interventions, leaving them stretched and overwhelmed.

- Response services work best when they are well-resourced and run by staff who are well-trained in trauma-informed approaches to avoid retraumatising victims. The emergency safe houses were painted in bright colours, with beautiful bedding, toys for children, a playground outside and were run by trained staff. When you arrive at the Centre, you are greeted by bright purple and red containers, the sound of children playing in the playground and a beautiful garden that mesmerises your eyes. All over the grounds are positive messages, engraved on stones, the tyres and the walls. The organisation deliberately did this to create a safe, welcoming and warm environment.
- NGOs must collaborate with other sectors: to address the high levels of violence, NGOs must maintain strong relations with, for example, the government and the SAPS. Lucinda highlighted the investment she had made in building relationships with various government and civil society partners. When these relationships fail, service delivery fails too.
- Dialogue is an important tool in strategies to address gangsterism and building safer communities. When asked about the strategies that helped her navigate gangsterism in the area, Lucinda explained that meeting with the gang leaders and engaging in difficult dialogue were effective deterrents. While she highlighted that this is not a sustainable approach, acknowledging that it has limitations, to be more effective this needs



“ Looking ahead, the organisation is preparing for two milestones: the official opening of its new Early Childhood Development Centre and the launch of the “Mom in Distress Centre”. These initiatives reflect the organisation’s continued commitment to providing holistic care and expanding its reach. ”

– Lucinda Evans

to be incorporated in bigger strategies aimed at addressing gang violence.

- NGOs need long-term funding and support to be impactful and sustainable: Funding for NGOs tends to be competitive and short-term, leaving them vulnerable. Lucinda expressed frustration about not owning the land where the centre is located, despite having invested in it and having made a request to the City of Cape Town. The lack of ownership left the organisation vulnerable.
- Interventions must start early: The organisation recognises the importance of early intervention and working with children, as one of the key investments for breaking intergenerational cycles of violence. They are currently building an ECD centre.





Reflections on the site visit

The second day began with reflections on the visit to Philisa Abafazi Bethu. Participants were asked: “What did this experience make you feel?”. The reflections revealed a wide range of emotions and insights about the organisation’s impact and the broader implications for community-based prevention.

The following themes emerged:

- Power and resilience:** Participants felt a strong sense of determination and acknowledged the organisation’s growth and resilience over the past seven years. They applauded the organisation’s commitment to creating safe, inclusive spaces for women, men and children, exemplifying a holistic approach to violence prevention.
- Resourcing and sustainability:** Participants felt frustrated at NGOs’ limited resources and support amid growing challenges, emphasising that current funding approaches are unsustainable and leave NGOs vulnerable. Since NGOs play a vital role in preventing violence, as shown by Philisa Abafazi Bethu, they must be well-resourced and protected. A question was also raised on how spaces like the VPF can advocate and support such efforts.
- Collaboration:** Lucinda Evans’s openness to cross-provincial collaboration was applauded as one of the drivers of impact. The importance of law enforcement in tackling gang violence was emphasised. Participants called for stronger partnerships among community groups, police and social services to improve safety and responsiveness.
- Dialogue:** The organisation’s willingness to engage with gangs, something considered taboo, and how effective it was, was noted as a big lesson about what innovative approaches to addressing gang violence can look like. Tackling violence requires courageous, deeper engagement with community dynamics, even gang activity.
- Knowledge sharing and advocacy:** Participants felt encouraged by the visit, highlighting the need for more research and knowledge sharing to understand effective interventions.

Aligned with the theme of planting seeds in the soil to realise the vision, Philisa Abafazi Bethu was praised as the powerful seed in the vision soil, building the kind of Western Cape we want to see.

Building on the insights from the visit, the rest of the second day was dedicated to presentations on key developments and efforts to prevent violence in the province.



Violence prevention efforts in the province

The Planet Youth Survey: new research on youth wellbeing

Blanche Rezant (pictured centre), Deputy Director of the Violence Prevention Unit in the Department of Health and Wellness, shared insights from the first-ever provincial [Planet Youth Survey](#), which looked at the well-being of young people in the province. Global evidence shows that early exposure to violence and adversity increases the likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator later in life, dropping out of school and being unemployed. Therefore, we know that the best way to break cycles of violence is to invest in creating safer childhoods.

The survey was completed by 49 000 learners from Grades 8 and 9 across 123 schools in the Cape Town Metro, West Coast District and Garden



Route. Instead of giving a PowerPoint Presentation of the findings, Blanche told a story and took us on a journey of what living in the province feels like for young people. Imagine a young 14-year-old girl, Amahle, born in Mitchells Plain, in grade 9, who took part in the survey, which had a 89% participation rate. What does the survey tell us about Amahle's life?



5

Peers and social influence

Amahle likes her friends. She plays with them even after school, especially when her mum works long shifts. Peer dynamics emerged as a powerful influence. Learners whose friends drink are seven times more likely to drink themselves. Nearly one in five learners (18%) feel pressured to vape, and 17% to drink. These findings show that while peers can amplify risks, they can also represent a critical opportunity for peer-led prevention and youth leadership initiatives.

6

Mental health

Amahle dreams of becoming an accountant and pushes herself to stay focused, even when things are stressful at home, and her mum does not have enough money for transport and food. Most learners (71%) reported good overall mental well-being, but the survey underscores deep inequalities and daily stressors. Girls report higher levels of emotional distress and sleep disruption linked to social media. The data points to the intersection between poverty (with 47% reporting experiencing food insecurity in the past week), digital stress and mental health, underscoring the need for holistic prevention strategies that address both material and emotional needs.

7

Schools as sites of safety and growth

For many, schools provide safety and stability. A large majority (84%) say they enjoy school, and 71% know where to find help if they feel unsafe. However, engagement is uneven: 30% find schoolwork useless, and 31% feel bored. These findings highlight the need to make schooling not only a safe environment, but also one that feels meaningful and relevant to learners' lives.

8

Belonging in communities

Amahle has lived in Mitchells Plain her whole life, and she knows all the neighbours. She is proud to have a community that looks out for one another, although she gets very scared when violence breaks out in the streets. She sometimes wishes they would move to a safer area. Perceptions of safety differ widely. While 68% feel safe in their communities, only 36% would like to stay in them long term. Less than half (43%) believe neighbours would intervene in a fight, and only 37% think they would stop drugs from being sold to children. These findings suggest a sense of community – with potential to build on.

9

Homes and parenting

Amahle lives with her mother, who works long hours at the supermarket, and two younger siblings. The role of parents and caregivers emerged as one of the strongest protective factors against violence and substance abuse. Most parents (85%) know where their children are at night, and learners who lack this level of monitoring are twice as likely to drink or use dagga. Encouragingly, 94% of learners report that their parents disapprove of dagga use, suggesting strong value alignment within families. Supporting parents to stay connected and informed remains a key lever for prevention.



The Planet Youth Survey is not a once-off project. The next steps involve sharing the results with various stakeholders, including schools, districts and parents, to co-create solutions that will be collectively implemented to build safer communities for children. The survey will be administered each year for the next ten years. The Department aims to use it as a key data source on how youth well-being evolves over time.

Participants walked around the room, engaging with the results. The results were well received, and it was noted that, moving forward, it is crucial to continue engaging with young people and ensure their voices are central to discussions about their futures and the environments they live in.

Lessons from the #ThinaSonke Campaign: violence is everyone's business

The two days showed that there are a lot of efforts and interventions being implemented to prevent violence in the province, but sometimes these efforts are not visible.

Nonyameko Jikwana (below left), a Community Engagement Mobiliser from [MOSAIC](#), shared the story about 'building impactful movements that foster solidarity and inspire action,' drawing on lessons from the #ThinaSonke campaign and the SAFE Platforms.

South Africa continues to experience persistently high levels of domestic and intimate partner violence (DV and IPV). In this context, silence and indifference allow violence against women, children and other vulnerable groups to continue unchecked. The #ThinaSonke campaign, meaning "All of us", was built to show the collective responsibility. The campaign challenges the notion that GBV is a private issue, reframing it as a societal crisis demanding collective responsibility and action.



The campaign used a combination of digital and in-person strategies, including mobilising survivors and ordinary citizens; carefully curated social-media posts and pamphlets, amplified by influential people; human rights and referral workshops, and the '[Walk for Healing](#)' – which helped to make survivors' voices visible and powerful.

The campaign mobilised hundreds of citizens across online and offline spaces, successfully breaking the silence for many survivors who previously felt isolated or ashamed. The flagship event – the Walk for Healing – exceeded its target, reaching over one million collective steps, symbolising the strength of unity in fighting violence. At the community level, campaign messages began to embed in local conversations, and men's participation in anti-GBV initiatives increased. Survivors reported feeling a renewed sense of connection, solidarity and shared purpose.

Reflecting on the campaign, participants noted the following lessons for multisectoral groups like the Forum:

- Movements are strongest when rooted in the voices and experiences of ordinary people. Solidarity grows through visible, participatory action that allows communities to witness and join in collective change.
- Storytelling and shared identity are powerful tools for transforming silence into collective action and hope.
- Call to actions amplify effectiveness: when we say "Thina Sonke", we send a resounding message to all South Africans: a violence-free country is only possible if we stand together. It calls the whole of society to join in the efforts.
- Advocacy can take different forms: the campaign was recognised as one way to advocate for violence prevention, and it was acknowledged that quieter advocacy occurs within organisations and departments – every effort counts.

Closure and evaluation: Does the vision begin with me?

The theme of the two days was ‘The vision begins with me’, and throughout the meeting, participants were encouraged to reflect on their violence prevention efforts and how they align with the vision. In closing, they were asked to reflect on this question, “What would my heart say at this point about our vision?”

Many arrived with feelings of doubt or fatigue, weighed down by the challenges of doing violence prevention work. By the end, however, there was a collective sense of hope, renewal and shared commitment to the Forum’s vision. Participants emphasised the importance of relationships and collaboration, recognising that trust and connection form the foundation for effective collective action. They acknowledged both the complexity of the challenges faced and the possibilities for co-creating solutions, including integrating law enforcement partners, such as SAPS, into ongoing dialogue. They highlighted that meaningful, sustainable change requires time, patience and continued effort.

Ultimately, the discussions conveyed a strong commitment to carry forward the lessons, inspiration and connections formed during the Forum meeting, translating hope and passion into action within their communities, while embodying the vision in their everyday work.

They reflected on feeling more deeply connected to one another, more aware of the distinct roles each organisation plays and more committed to the shared vision of a safer, more caring Western Cape. The quotes below capture this transformation.



“I left feeling inspired, connected and reconnected to this community. I’ve deepened my awareness of the different components involved in violence prevention”
– NGO

“My lack of hope was challenged. Suddenly, I believe that a Western Cape marked by love, care, respect, collaboration, peace and safety is possible.”
– NGO

“We have fertile ground where we can plant the seeds. We need to focus more on what is working”
– NGO



“You reap what you sow, but you do not sow today and reap immediately. Investment in prevention is a long-term project.”
– Chandré Gould

Appendix 1: Participant list

Name	Organisation
Abigail Ornellas	University of Cape Town (UCT)
Andisiwe Makwecana	Institute for Security Studies
Blanche Rezzant	Violence Prevention Unit (VPU), Department of Health and Wellness (DOHW)
Bronwyn Moore	Community Cohesion
Carmen De Vos	The Parent Centre
Catherine Kannemeyer	City of Cape Town
Chandré Gould	Institute for Security Studies
Daniel Sass	Department of Community Arts and Culture Development
Han-marie Marshall	Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety
Irvin Kinnes	UCT
Jackie Saaiman	Lima Rural Development
Jaco Van Schalkwyk	The Character Company
Janine Turner	Chrysalis Academy
Jill Ryan	University of Stellenbosch
Kaathima Ebrahim	Mikhulu Trust
Kwakhanya Max	Institute for Security Studies
Lilitha Madikizela	Life Choices
Lucinda Evans	Philisa Abafazi Bethu
Luvuyo Zahela	Cesvi Foundation
Makanatsa Ziyambi	Equal Education
Makava Chiguvare	Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town
Micheal Abrams	Facilitator
Ming-han Motlounq	VPU, DOHW
Nicole Chetty	UCT, Global Parenting Initiative
Noluthando Ndlwana	Western Cape Police Ombudsman
Nonyameko Jikwana	Mosaic
Oswald D. Reddy	Western Cape Police Ombudsman
Renier Louw	Boys 2 Men
Rochshana Kemp	Western Cape Education Department
Senzekile Bengu	Institute for Security Studies
Stef Snel	Tales of Turning
Tanya Jacobs	University of the Western Cape
Themani Dyule	MOSAIC
Thuli Mthembu	University of the Western Cape
Veronica Mayer	UCT
Vuyo Koyana	The Pan African Market, Facilitator
Wilmi Dippenaar	SAPPIN
Yolisa Piliso	Equal Education
Zacharia Mshele	Mashele Media, Photographer
Zolani Mfihlo	Abantu chorus



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.

Funders and supporters

The Violence Prevention Forum is supported by GIZ and the Wellspring Philanthropic Trust.

© 2026, Institute for Security Studies

Copyright in the volume as a whole is vested in the Institute for Security Studies and the authors, and no part may be reproduced in whole or in part without the express permission, in writing, of both the authors and the publishers.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the ISS, its trustees, members of the Advisory Council or donors. Authors contribute to ISS publications in their personal capacity.

Cover: Zacharia Mshele
