

Building effective  
**multisector partnerships** with the  
**private sector** to prevent violence



22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the  
Violence Prevention Forum

Anglo American, Johannesburg,  
South Africa

8–9 October 2025

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<b>DSD</b>	Department of Social Development
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>ISS</b>	Institute for Security Studies
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental Organisations
<b>VAC</b>	Violence Against Children
<b>VPF</b>	Violence Prevention Forum
<b>SAPPIN</b>	South African Parenting Programme Implementers Network

# Executive summary

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Violence Prevention Forum (VPF) meeting was held on 8–9 October 2025 at Anglo American’s head office in Johannesburg. This reflected the meeting’s focus on building effective multisectoral partnerships with the private sector to prevent violence. This was the second of a two-part series; the first meeting was held in May 2025 in Wilderness. The report of the first meeting is available [here](#).

This was the first time a meeting was held at a company, and it was a deliberate choice aligned with the meeting’s focus. As Senzekile Bengu highlighted in her welcome, “... it is significant to be gathering here today, at the heart of South Africa’s economic development and struggle, and where the G20 meeting is taking place – Jozi. At a time when globally we are seeing the highest levels of war and conflict since the Second World War. It is worth reminding ourselves, especially in these times, that the world we see today was not the work of an invisible hand of the system ... that human capacity and relationships are the key to changing systems and preventing violence”.

The focus on the private sector came from the recognition that there was an opportunity and need to engage the private sector to better understand and inform the role that companies can and do



Since 2015, the Violence Prevention Forum (VPF/Forum) has provided a platform for convening researchers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government departments, donors, development partners and the private sector. The forum’s overall objective is to ensure that knowledge and evidence inform violence prevention efforts at scale in South Africa.

play in preventing violence. This stems from three observations: private-sector references are growing in GBV strategies; companies are typically

**“Violence prevention is the whole of society working deliberately and sustainably to remove sources of harm and inequality, and heal woundedness, by intentionally growing an ethic of mutual care, respect and inclusion to build peace.”**

**– VPF’s definition of violence prevention**



viewed primarily as funders rather than as active prevention partners; and cross-sector collaboration and knowledge-sharing remain more limited than they could be. The VPF's whole-of-society approach to violence prevention seeks to address these gaps (see Theory of change, Appendix 2).

The first meeting in May focused on developing a shared understanding of the drivers of violence and its economic costs. Participants learned about each sector's work, effective violence

prevention interventions and visited two sites: a community outdoor gym in Touwsrante and Tikketai, a private-sector agro-processing packhouse in George that piloted [Free to Grow](#), a workplace violence prevention programme. Time was dedicated to deepening relationships and empathy between sectors.

This report summarises the key discussions, research insights, and lessons from the meeting. A short video of the meeting is available [here](#).

**Building on the May meeting, the October gathering aimed to:**

- Strengthen cross-sector relationships and unlock long-term investment in violence prevention.
- Deepen understanding of the private sector's role in violence prevention beyond financial contributions.
- Challenge unhelpful assumptions between sectors.
- Share knowledge and evidence about effective interventions.
- Support private sector participants in making the case for investing in prevention.
- Work towards a shared language about violence and its prevention.



# Progress since the last meeting

At the end of the first meeting in May, participants were asked to think about the next small step they could take in their work, incorporating the lessons they had learned. Participants were invited to position themselves in relation to six statements and to share the steps or developments since the last meeting. This provided a visual map of the progress made and the value participants had gained in the previous meeting.



Overall, the session highlighted the Forum’s vital role in bridging efforts – building trust, challenging assumptions, and supporting more coordinated, whole-of-society action.



## The current context: reflections through the Truth Mandala

Participants used the Truth Mandala – a reflective practice from [Joanna Macy's \*Coming Back to Life\*](#) – to process the emotional realities of their work. Six symbolic objects represented emotions: a stick for anger, dead leaves for sadness, a black bag for fear, a candle for hope, an African basket and beads for joy and pride, and a cushion for other feelings.

Participants named sadness over the scale of violence and the slow pace of change; anger at corruption and leadership failures; and fear around political uncertainty and surface-level responses to deep structural problems.

Yet hope and joy were notably strong – grounded in the participant's

collective commitment, visible collaboration and growing evidence of impact.

A striking observation was the shift in emotional tone compared to previous meetings: while sadness, anger and fear remained, there was a far more pronounced embrace of optimism. This was not naivety – it was grounded in the real progress participants could see in their work and the ecosystem, and the hope they felt in the room.



# Sharing knowledge and evidence

Five expert presentations provided an evidence base for the meeting's discussions: the intergenerational transmission of violence; findings from South Africa's first national GBV prevalence study; online parenting support as a prevention strategy; developments in dispute resolution law and policy; and lessons on mobilising the private sector for safer cities.

## Understanding how violence is passed from one generation to the next: insights from the Violence Across Generations study

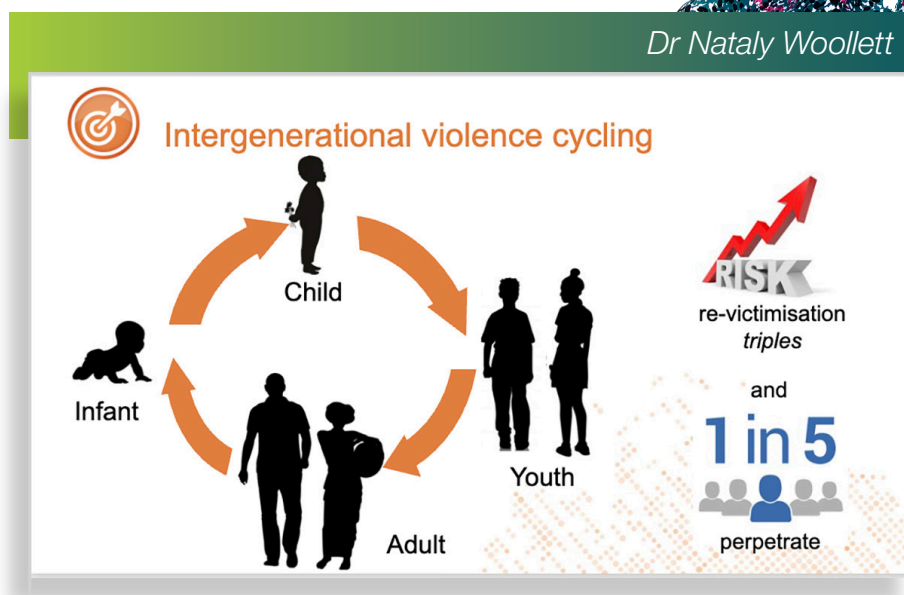
Dr Nataly Woollett (University of the Witwatersrand) drew on the [Interrupt Violence](#) longitudinal study (2010–2024) – the first three-generation study of violence in South Africa – to outline how violence is passed from one generation to the next. This research collected data on children, their parents or caregivers, their grandparents and their families. A central finding is that childhood exposure to violence significantly increases the risk of both re-victimisation and perpetration in adulthood.

Violence is transmitted through interconnected mechanisms: social learning normalises harmful behaviour; childhood abuse is strongly linked to depression, anxiety and PTSD, reducing coping capacity; survivors of early trauma often struggle with consistent, supportive caregiving; and broader structural drivers – gender inequality, poverty, and chronic stress – create environments where violence persists across generations.

These pathways interact and reinforce one another over time, shaping patterns of violence across the life course. The findings highlight the importance of early intervention, particularly in childhood, supporting caregivers, addressing mental health, and tackling structural drivers such as gender inequality and poverty. They point to the need for integrated approaches across individual, family, and societal levels to interrupt cycles of violence.



Dr Nataly Woollett



## What leaders need to understand about GBV in South Africa: insights from the first national prevalence study

Dr Nompumelelo Zungu presented findings from the [HSRC's national GBV survey](#) (2022), the first of its kind in South Africa. The survey examined childhood experiences of abuse, adult victimisation and perpetration, health-seeking behaviour, and the norms and socio-economic conditions that shape risks. The study combined data from women and men across all provinces.

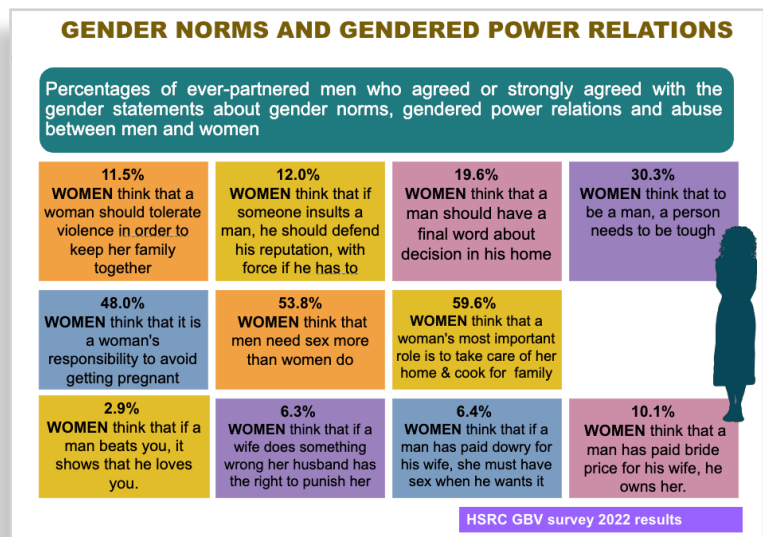
Childhood trauma – including emotional, physical and sexual abuse, witnessing violence against mothers, and bullying – was strongly linked to later victimisation and perpetration. Inequitable gender norms, relationship conflict, and socio-economic conditions also significantly shaped risk.



**Key findings:**

- More than half of women (58%) reported physical abuse before age 15; four per cent reported sexual abuse.
- Among men, nearly three in four (74.6%) experienced physical abuse before age 18; 15.7% experienced sexual abuse.
- One in five men (20.4%) reported being hit or beaten by a female partner; men also faced community violence, including threats with knives (13.5%) and guns (9.8%).
- 7.8% of men reported perpetrating sexual violence against other men.

*Dr Nompumelelo Zungu*



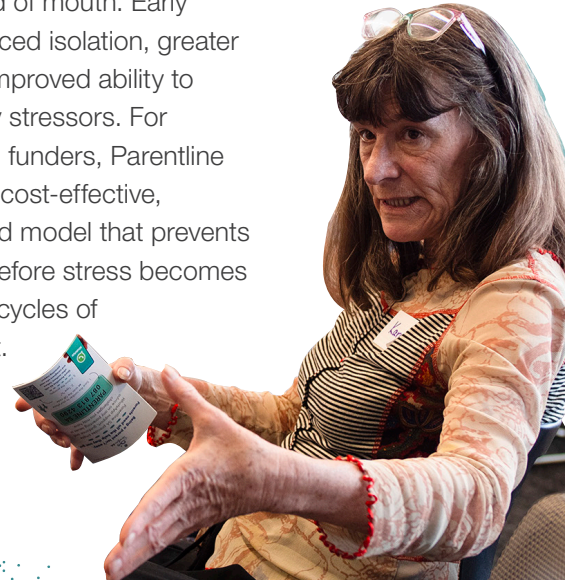
Dr Zungu emphasised that GBV cannot be understood in isolation from its broader determinants. Effective prevention requires addressing childhood trauma, shifting harmful gender norms, reducing substance abuse, and tackling socio-economic conditions that fuel violence – supported by strong, coordinated cross-sector leadership.

The majority of female survivors sought help primarily from the police (30.7%) and health facilities (21.6%), while very few accessed courts (10.8%), social services (6.2%), women's organisations (1.9%), or shelters (0.8%). This highlights the need for improved coordination between these services and a better understanding of the barriers to accessing NGO- and shelter-based support.

**Why online parenting support matters for violence prevention: insights from Parentline South Africa**

Karen Ross presented [Parentline South Africa](#), a WhatsApp-based parenting support tool developed through the [South African Parenting Programme Implementers Network \(SAPPIN\)](#). Parenting programmes are among the most effective approaches to preventing violence against children, but many caregivers cannot access in-person programmes due to cost, time, and other barriers. Parentline meets parents where they are – on mobile phones – offering real-time, evidence-based guidance that reduces stress and promotes positive parenting.

The platform integrates digital support with referral to nearby NGOs and trained community support workers, and has reached over 1 200 active users through community health workers and word of mouth. Early users report reduced isolation, greater confidence and improved ability to manage everyday stressors. For policymakers and funders, Parentline offers a scalable, cost-effective, evidence-informed model that prevents violence early – before stress becomes harm and before cycles of violence take root.



Karen Ross

**Parentline SA**  
087 813 4290

**Need parenting support?  
Help is just a WhatsApp message away!**

Parentline SA is a user-friendly support platform for mothers, fathers and caregivers across South Africa.

Parents can interact with the Parentline SA chatbot through WhatsApp at 087 813 4290 to receive reliable, bite-size information and tips on a variety of topics related to everyday parenting challenges. The advice provided promotes positive parenting skills.

Parentline SA is available 24/7 and requires low data usage, as it does not include images or videos.

The content on Parentline SA comprehensively covers topics including child development, behaviour, nutrition and well-being across each developmental milestone from 0-18 years and is continually being updated, so you can keep checking in for more!

- 1 Save the number to your phone or scan the QR code
- 2 Type "hi"
- 3 Follow the prompts.

Share Parentline SA with other mothers, fathers and caregivers who need parenting support

Parentline meets parents where they are – on mobile phones – offering real-time, evidence-based guidance that reduces stress and promotes positive parenting



**Understanding the Mediation Act and ADRFM Bill: what they mean for families, communities and violence prevention**

Dr Dellene Clark (South African Law Reform Commission) outlined two significant law reform initiatives with important implications for families, communities and violence prevention.

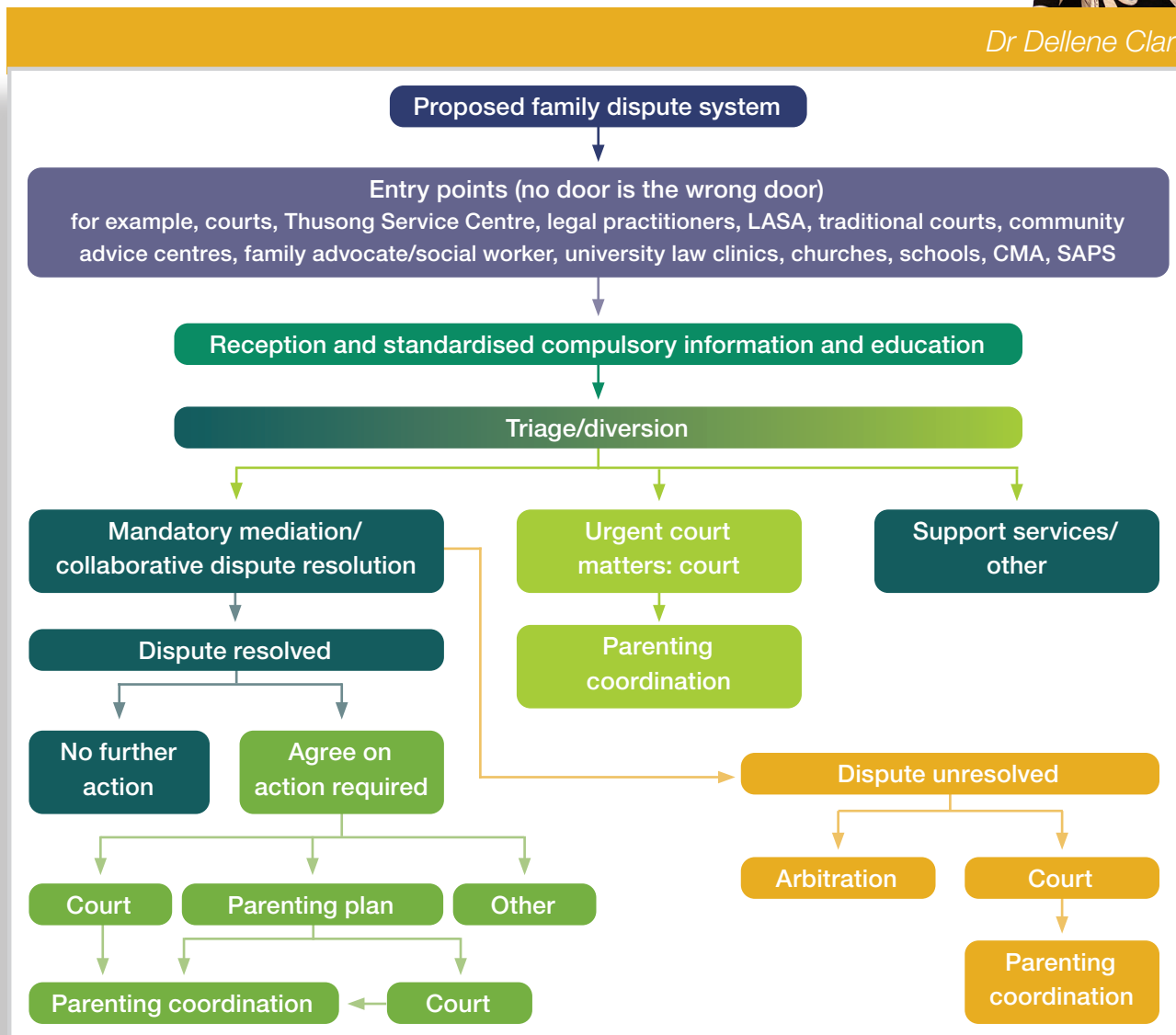
*Project 100A* proposes a Family Dispute Resolution Act to reduce reliance on adversarial court processes that prolong conflict and expose children to harm. The context is stark: only 35% of children live with both biological parents; 80% of parties to family law disputes are unrepresented; over half of divorces involve children; and court backlogs are so severe that some cases are scheduled as far out as 2031.

The proposed system would offer a ‘no wrong door’ model with structured triage, mandatory

mediation, and a suite of dispute resolution mechanisms – family arbitration, collaborative family practice, parenting coordination – centred on children’s needs and therapeutic justice principles. In parallel, Project 94 proposes a national Mediation Act to regulate mediators, standardise procedures, and embed mediation across multiple sectors. Community mediation – drawing on traditional courts and restorative justice – is also being explored as a further pillar. The Family Dispute Resolution Bill has been referred for Cabinet consideration following ministerial endorsement.



Dr Dellene Clark



## What we're learning about mobilising the private sector: lessons from Jozi My Jozi

Diale Lodi (COO, [Jozi My Jozi](#)) shared lessons from mobilising the private sector for safer cities in inner-city Johannesburg. Jozi My Jozi is a civic movement that brings together residents, government, business, and community stakeholders to co-design solutions across safety, the environment, social support, education, and urban renewal.

Practical achievements include solar-powered streetlights in high-risk areas – improving safety for women, schoolchildren, and workers travelling after dark and reducing opportunities for crime. Social initiatives address homelessness through a Point-in-Time Count tracking homeless individuals across precincts, a drop-in shelter model, responsible giving campaigns, and strengthened referral pathways to social services.

A key lesson from Jozi My Jozi's work is that sustainable urban safety requires addressing social precarity and exclusion alongside physical infrastructure – and that meaningful private sector engagement depends on relationship-building, shared ownership, and long-term commitment rather than once-off contributions.



Diale Lodi

## School play on bullying

Day one closed with a performance by Nkgo Ya Metsi, a [play](#) addressing school bullying that has been performed in over 45 schools across Johannesburg.

The production depicted cycles of jealousy, academic pressure, and bullying – including scenes of corporal punishment and public shaming by the teacher – exposing structural as well as peer-level dynamics.

Participants were encouraged to observe how the play affected them. The graphic scenes evoked various emotions, and the music and games brought about nostalgia.

Post-performance discussions highlighted the creative arts as a powerful complement to evidence-based violence prevention in schools. Key considerations for future iterations included balancing realism with



age-appropriateness, clearly modelling non-violent alternatives, and integrating the performance within broader support systems – linking school-based work to parenting and caregiver programmes as part of a more integrated approach to violence prevention.

# Sense-making through Nancy Kline's listening principles

Day two opened with participants surfacing questions that had stayed with them: how to demonstrate impact, translate research into accessible insights, navigate funder expectations, and bring in missing voices – particularly children. A paired listening exercise using Nancy Kline's 'Time to Think' framework (see Appendix 4) created space for uninterrupted reflection.

In plenary, participants noted the importance of interrogating assumptions about power and influence in the system – particularly around the role of funders – and recognising opportunities for more intentional engagement. Participants also reflected on how attention, equality, and openness can shift hierarchical dynamics and enable more honest dialogue, both within teams and across sectors. The session provided a practical tool that participants could apply in their own organisations, to support more inclusive thinking and decision-making.

Leaders valued the process. They highlighted the importance of creating space to pause and think, the shift that occurs when assumptions are explored, and the impact of feeling heard. Overall, the session demonstrated that sense-making is a critical part of violence prevention work. Creating intentional spaces for reflection, listening and questioning can strengthen collaboration, surface new insights and support more effective action across the system.



# Closure: lessons on building partnerships with the private sector

Across the two days, a clear message emerged: effective violence prevention requires intentional multisectoral collaboration – particularly with the private sector. Sustained partnerships depend on trust, shared values and a common understanding of violence prevention that moves beyond transactional relationships.

The sessions also highlighted the ongoing challenge of bridging research, policy and practice: evidence is increasingly available, but translating data into accessible, actionable insights remains difficult. Strengthening shared monitoring, evaluation and learning across sectors will be critical.

The Forum's value as a space for dialogue, sense-making, and relationship-building was consistently affirmed by participants:

**"I was inspired to think deeply about my role in the violence prevention ecosystem ... the check-in activities and research inputs challenged my own thoughts and strategies."**

*– Government*

**"The VPF provided a safe space that was healing ... connecting the dots about evidence and improving the way I do things in the future."**

*– Research*

**"I learned a great deal, met some remarkable people ... and made some really useful connections ... I will be going home with new ideas and potential partnerships."**

*– Civil society/NGO*

**"It created more opportunities for partnerships and collaboration, and located the private sector more firmly in violence prevention."**

*– Private sector*



# Appendix 1: Participant list of the 22<sup>nd</sup> VPF

Name	Organisation
Alessio Marcus	Western Cape Education Department
Andisiwe Makwecana	Institute for Security Studies
Ayanda Mazibuko	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
Blanche Rezant	Violence Prevention Unit, Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness
Carmen Abdoll	Cornerstone Economic Research
Chandré Gould	Institute for Security Studies
Dellene Clark	South African Law Reform Commission
Diale Lodi	Jozi My Jozi
Dolence Matabane	Institute for Security Studies
Gugu Xaba	Save the Children South Africa
Jabu Mashinini	Leadership Pathways (facilitator)
Jenna-Lee Strugnell	Tales of Turning
Jody van der Heyde	Institute for Security Studies
Judy Connors	Independent Consultant (facilitator)
Karen Ross	Mikhulu Trust
Kathryn Baxter	The SPAR Group Ltd
Kulani Mathebula	Global Compact Network South Africa
Lusindiso Holiday	Anglo American
Luxolo Matomela Kroger	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
Marcel Korth	Independent Consultant
Merl Swartz	MOSAIC
Nataly Woollett	Wits University
Nompumelelo Zungu	Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
Nonzwakazi Adonisi	Valterra Platinum
Nozipho January-Bardill	Anglo American
Nwabisa Jama-Shai	South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)
Odendaal Esterhuyse	Private
Senzekile Bengu	Institute for Security Studies
Sifiso Ngobese	Department of Basic Education
Tamary Maluleke	Department of Social Development (DSD)
Thamsanqa Mzaku	Phaphama Initiatives
Thandi van Heyningen	Institute for Security Studies
Tirhani Manganyi	GBVF Response Fund
Wilmi Dippenaar	South African Parenting Programmers Implementers Network (SAPPIN)
Zanele Zwane	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

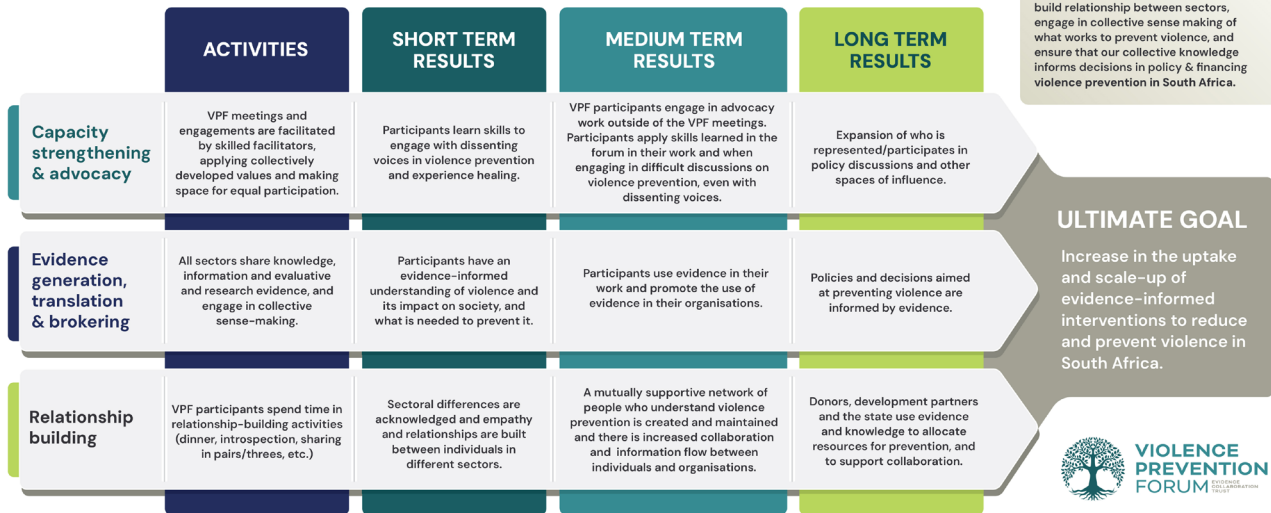
# Appendix 2: Theory of change



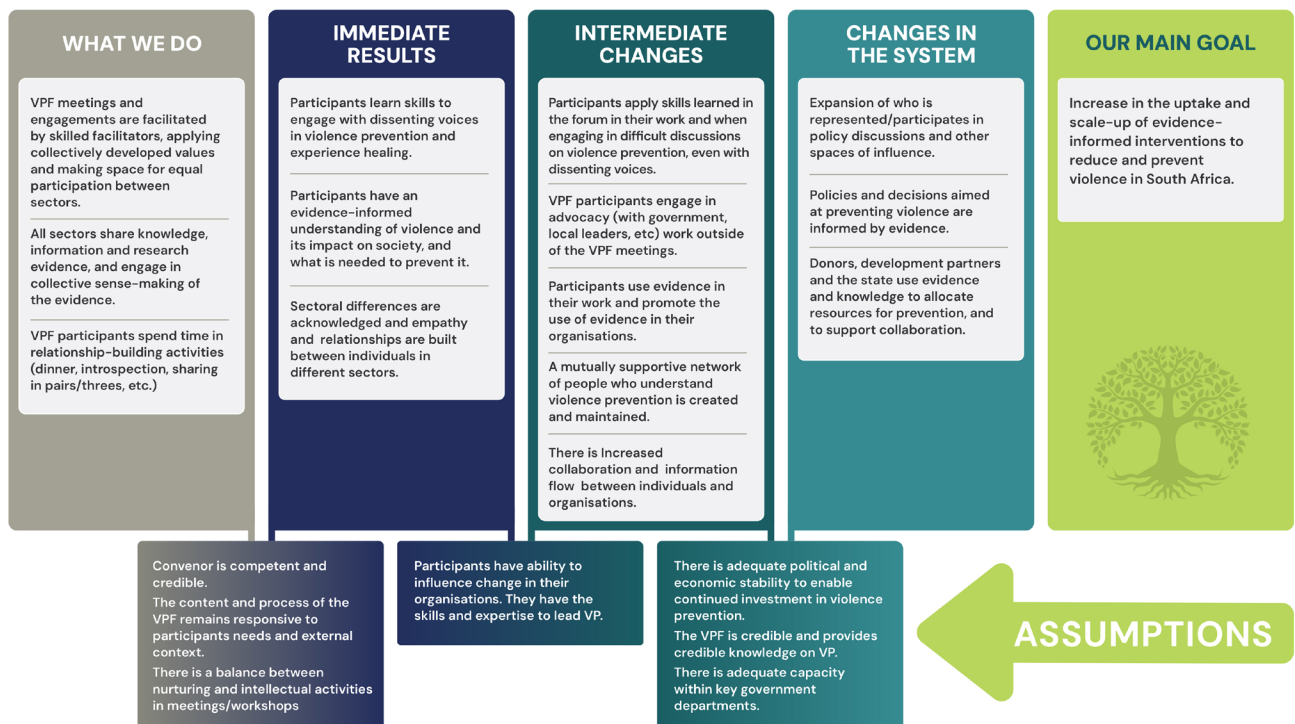
## Problem statement

There are poor or antagonistic relationships and communication between sectors working to prevent violence in South Africa. This hampers the use of evidence in policy and practice to prevent violence. There is often frustration that promising programs designed and tested by researchers and NGOs, and evidence generated to show what has the potential to prevent violence, are not scaled up by the government. At the same time, the government is not always aware of what was being developed and tested, and research does not always have pragmatic proposals for how it should be used to inform the scale-up of programmes. There are limited opportunities for dialogue, relationship building and knowledge sharing.

In short, we are a space for dialogue to build relationship between sectors, engage in collective sense making of what works to prevent violence, and ensure that our collective knowledge informs decisions in policy & financing violence prevention in South Africa.



## Theory of change



# Appendix 3: Senzekile Bengu's framing

Good morning and welcome to the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Violence Prevention Forum.

We have gathered for these meetings at many places – at NGOs in Touwsrante, Alexander, Gqeberha, and Soweto. We met at the Department of Basic Education and at a primary school. We have gathered online. We have met at the South African Medical Research Council. We have even gathered at a church.

This is the first Forum meeting hosted by a company, which is fitting for its focus. While we have met in Johannesburg many times, it is significant to be gathering here today, at the heart of South Africa's economic development and struggle, the hub of creativity, the home of change-makers, and where the G20 meeting is taking place – Jozi.

We are meeting at a time when globally we are seeing the highest levels of war and conflict since the Second World War, the highest levels of inequality, and a return of divisive identity-driven politics. Nationally, we are watching the Madlanga Commission, witnessing rising insecurities in families and communities, as well as increasing public protests and frustration with the status quo.

And at times, it can feel like everything is just one domino away from falling apart, and that our efforts get swallowed up by the gigantic problem of violence. However, if one looks at the world and our efforts through the lens of how change happens, a different, more nuanced picture emerges.

140 years ago, the roads outside, this building and this city were not here; and it's not just the buildings, South Africa was a completely different country back then. When I consider how much has actually changed.

It takes huge confidence and a huge leap of faith to believe one can bring about change. Yet, humans have been changing the world for centuries, long before AI or social media. It is worth reminding

ourselves, especially in these times, that the world we see today was not the work of an invisible hand of the system, but a result of very visible human hands.

On this understanding and belief, ten years ago, we established this Forum as a platform for leaders, human beings, from different sectors – government, research, NGOs, development partners and private sector partners – with a shared commitment to preventing violence in South Africa, to come together to dialogue, share research, knowledge, and best practices.

We, the Institute for Security Studies, with our partners, started the Forum out of frustration at our inability to make the changes needed to interrupt cycles of violence, despite all our efforts.

Part of the challenge was how we were engaging with each other as different sectors – often speaking at each other and not listening to and learning from one another. We seldom had opportunities to meet like this, to dialogue, share knowledge, and make sense of it collectively. We seldom met to deepen our understanding of each other's work, plan together, and collaborate.

When evidence and knowledge about what works to prevent violence are easily accessible and understood by leaders who are open to learning and sharing; and when opportunities are created for these leaders to engage across divides of, sectors, races, gender and age, with the aim of learning more about each other's work and perspectives, our understanding of the problem improves, and we also build meaningful, trusting relationships grounded in respect and empathy.

And it is this human capacity and relationships that are the key to changing systems and preventing violence.

We have seen the change in how we engage and collaborate as sectors. We have seen donors and policymakers incorporate our evidence and practice



knowledge in their policies and strategies, we have seen the government invest money in early prevention, and we have seen changes in language, how leaders speak about violence, the need for a whole-of-society approach, early intervention informed by evidence, and many more ...

We noticed that over the past few years, there has been a growing commitment, interest and action by the private sector to address violence. For that reason, the multisectoral group that provides strategic guidance for this Forum agreed that the time was right to draw companies and business associations into the Forum so that we can continue to learn together and create fertile soil for collaboration.

So, the focus of the VPF meetings this year has been on building effective multisector partnerships with the private sector to prevent violence. We held our first meeting in May, and this is our second.

We have already started to see the fruits of the meeting we held in May in Wilderness.

What we are seeing is that 'What is good for families and society is also good for business'.

Over the next two days, we will continue this journey, deepening our knowledge and understanding of violence and how to prevent it. We will get to understand each other's work better and make sense together of what is needed to build a safer, more prosperous country.

I believe that one day, we will tell a story of how we prevented violence in South Africa. It will not be a story about the government's triumph, NGOs winning the fight, or the private sector coming to the rescue. Instead, it will be about how, through the sharing of knowledge, the joining of hands, working deliberately and sustainably – setting aside differences and focusing on commonalities – a system was shifted.

And that is what makes me excited to be in this room today.

Welcome, and I look forward to being together.

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## Appendix 4:

# Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment

Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment, outlined in her book *Time to Think*, is based on the principle that the quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first – and that the quality of thinking depends on how we treat one another while thinking.

The approach identifies ten components that create the conditions for independent, high-quality thinking:

**Attention:** listening without interruption and with genuine interest. The quality of attention given directly influences the quality of thinking.

**Equality:** treating each person as an equal thinker and giving everyone an equal opportunity to contribute.

**Ease:** creating a calm environment free from urgency, allowing thinking to unfold without pressure.

**Appreciation:** acknowledging what is working well to support clearer and more confident thinking.

**Encouragement:** supporting individuals to think independently without competition or comparison.

**Feelings:** allowing appropriate expression of emotion, recognising that this can unblock and improve thinking.

**Information:** ensuring that thinking is informed by accurate and sufficient information.

**Difference:** valuing diverse perspectives and actively challenging assumptions that limit thinking.

**Incisive questions:** identifying and challenging limiting assumptions to enable new ways of thinking.

**Place:** creating a physical and relational environment that communicates respect and value, enabling people to think more clearly.

Together, these components create a 'thinking environment' that supports deeper reflection, better decision-making, and more inclusive and effective collaboration.



## 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 and supporters

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