



SAFER PLACES:
RESILIENT INSTITUTIONS AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

SPRINT

LEARNING BRIEF 4

Gender, safety and VPIs

2021



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RESILIENT INSTITUTIONS AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

SPRINT

An initiative of the South African -
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This initiative will contribute to strengthening and empowering a learning network amongst already well-established civil society organisations, working closely with municipalities and other partners, to apply approaches and tools for violence prevention through urban upgrading, in line with the objectives of the Integrated Urban Development Framework and other relevant policy frameworks, particularly in the human settlement and safer communities sector.

ABOUT SPRINT

The Safer Places: Resilient Institutions and Neighbourhoods Together (SPRINT) Project is a joint initiative of the South African-German Development Cooperation with the support of the GIZ – Inclusive Violence Prevention Programme (GIZ VCP), implemented by Isandla Institute and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU NPC). The initiative was conceptualised in response to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has amplified risk factors for violence and crime in vulnerable communities. The project aims to support and strengthen institutions and organisations working to build resilience in communities across the country by utilising and upscaling targeted, area-based violence prevention interventions (ABVPI). The project vision is the institutionalisation of effective ABVPIs in the development and management of vulnerable urban communities.

To achieve this, the SPRINT Project has two distinct, but inter-related, pathways:

A Learning Network, which consists of a civil society organisations (CSOs) from a cross-section of sectors, and creates opportunities for peer exchanges resulting in learning and advocacy documentation.

A Laboratory, which involves capacity-building processes with participating municipalities and local CSOs, and focuses on co-designing and implementing practical, area-based solutions to violence-related challenges.

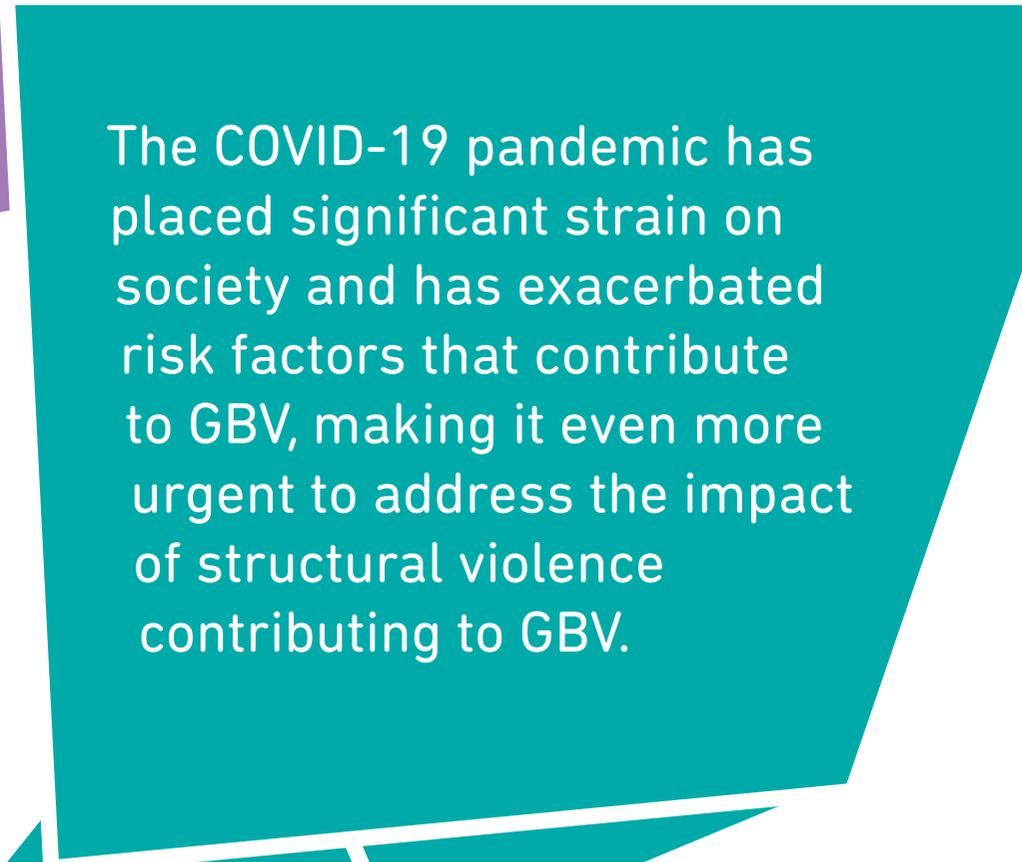
The project's Steering Committee, which is led by the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG), together with the Department of Human Settlements (DHS), National Treasury and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), oversee and endorse this initiative.



ABOUT THE LEARNING NETWORK

In 2020/21, the thematic journey of the Learning Network is conceptualised in two parts. The first is contextual which relates to the South African VPI context and the impact of COVID-19 and the second part focuses on institutions and systems needed to implement VPI. Critical knowledge from participating organisations is drawn into the Learning Network's outputs and the the multistakeholder events. The multistakeholder events bring together CSOs, municipalities and national government departments and agencies to discuss violence and crime prevention theory and practice. The deliberate and unique cross-section of CSO participants within the Learning Network and their varied experiences, knowledge and expertise is central to the success of the SPRINT Project. Participating organisations include Afesis-corplan, Masifunde, Agape Youth Movement, Ndifuna Ukwazi, Cape Development and Dialogue Centre Trust (CDDC), Open Streets Cape Town, Caritas, People's Environmental Planning (PEP), Planact, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), Project Empower, Development Action Group (DAG), Sinosizo Siyaphambili, Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU NPC) and Isandla Institute.

The long-term aim of the Learning Network is to achieve enhanced innovation and evaluation capacity to strengthen and expand violence and crime prevention solutions.

A large teal speech bubble with a white border, containing text. The background features purple and teal geometric shapes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant strain on society and has exacerbated risk factors that contribute to GBV, making it even more urgent to address the impact of structural violence contributing to GBV.

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth in a series of learning briefs produced by Isandla Institute under the Safer Places: Resilient Institutions and Neighbourhoods Together (SPRINT) Project. The briefs are developed from the Learning Network sessions. The title of the fourth session, hosted by Isandla Institute on 18 February 2021, and the focus of this brief is 'Gender, safety and VPIs'.

The brief introduces a definition of gender that is broad and inclusive. Defining gender-based violence (GBV), and identifying the various types of GBV enables a greater understanding of how GBV manifests. Detail on structural violence assists with identifying the system of factors that contribute to GBV. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant strain on society and has exacerbated the risk factors that contribute to GBV such as socio-economic inequality between men and women and poverty, making it even more urgent to address the impact of structural violence contributing to GBV.

The brief draws on the reflections of participating CSOs to examine responses to GBV. This includes utilising the socio-ecological model as a key tool to better understand the factors that contribute to GBV allows for more targeted violence prevention interventions (VPIs) that respond to these. It also includes a discussion identifying features of safe and inclusive environments. Through this engagement it was confirmed that the built environment plays a key role in creating an environment of potential risk of GBV. The brief ends with emerging key messages on increasing gender safety and how this can be incorporated into VPIs.

Gender-based violence is a broad term that describes “violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between ... genders, within the context of a specific society.”

(Shelah. 2008)

UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND GENDER SAFETY

The conventional definition of gender is expanding, and a focus on gender requires recognition that it is a complex, intersectional issue. Gender encompasses “the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other” (WHO. n.d.). Gender-based violence is a broad term that describes “violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between ... genders, within the context of a specific society” (Shelah. 2008).

There are various ways in which the manifestation of GBV can be understood. While distinctions are made in classifying GBV in different ways, it is important to note that these are not mutually exclusive categories. Such manifestations include: violence against women and girls; intimate partner violence; domestic violence; sexual violence; violence against LGBTQI+ people; and indirect structural violence (SaferSpaces. 2020). The majority of intimate partner violence (IPV) is committed by men against women, with the perpetrator of the violence being a partner or known to the woman (WHO. 2005). Because the majority of GBV is violence against women and girls (VAWG), this is where a majority of GBV prevention interventions focus. Looking particularly at sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), women and girls are often the target of SGBV, and “LGBTQ+, working-class and disabled women and girls experience even greater risks of SGBV: lesbian women living in townships have been especially targeted by male perpetrators of ‘corrective rape’” (SaferSpaces. 2020).



STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The term 'structural violence', coined by Johan Galtung (1969), also called social injustice, includes social structures, norms or contexts that prevent individuals from attaining their basic needs. Galtung (1969) identifies four factors that contribute to structural violence: exploitation, penetration, fragmentation and marginalisation. Caprioli (2005) applies Galtung's factors to gender-based structural violence in a way that is useful to understand the various drivers of GBV towards women, and how such drivers persist and are reinforced. The first is 'exploitation', which is based on the division of labour and is tied to gender roles and expectations. Women are often seen as being responsible for maintaining the household and looking after the children, and spend 3 times as many hours as men on unpaid care work at home (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. 2020) in addition to working and bringing in income. This places a large burden on them which

is often not acknowledged. The second factor is closely tied to exploitation and is the penetration into the consciousness of individuals, whereby such beliefs "maintained through socialization, gender stereotyping, and a constant threat of violence...all of which insidiously identify women as inferior" (Caprioli. 2005). Such a factor reinforces the status quo and makes it difficult to recognise and challenge this disparity. The third factor, fragmentation, is a result of women having less time (due to the greater family responsibilities) to socialise, build strong connections and become politically active (Caprioli. 2005). Finally, marginalisation is easier to reinforce due to the clear separation that is evident between men and women, as when this distinction can be clearly made, it is easier to perpetuate the exploitation of women (Caprioli. 2005). Structural violence and direct violence are "inextricably related" (Gilligan. 1997) and attempts to engage with GBV require an understanding of the impact of structural violence.

The abovementioned exploration of not only what gender entails, but how gender-based violence can be understood, highlights the complex and intersectional nature of it. As such, GBV is impacted by “other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others” (WHO. n.d.).

Some key drivers of GBV include gendered power inequality that is rooted in patriarchy, such as social norms (which may be cultural or religious), low levels of women’s empowerment, lack of social support, socio-economic inequality, and substance abuse (SaferSpace. N.d). There are many factors that put women, children and vulnerable groups at risk. The socio-ecological model (see Figure 1 below) can be a useful resource in identifying the long and short-term risk factors for violence at different social levels. The different levels identified in the socio-ecological model include: individual, relationship, community, and societal. At each of these levels, there are factors that contribute to the risk of falling victim to violence and or perpetrating violence. The factors identified on each level interact with each other across levels. For example, trauma on an individual level could lead to substance abuse issues that may result in violence, which can be reinforced by a community where such substances are easily available, or substance abuse and violence are commonplace. Vulnerability arises from the complex interplay of individual, relational and structural factors; addressing this likewise has to acknowledge these multiple levels. Approaches to engaging with and addressing GBV require deliberate recognition of how gender manifests, what it means, and the implications for implementing the approaches.

Vulnerability arises from the complex interplay of individual, relational and structural factors

The socio-ecological model included here has been populated with both the risk factors that contribute to GBV, and interventions that could assist in preventing it.

- History of maltreatment/violence
- Drug or alcohol misuse by partner
- Being socially isolated
- Younger age
- Partner under/unemployed

- Separation/leaving (risk of femicide)
- Being socially isolated
- Common-law or separated (vs. married)



- Social and cultural norms that diminish the status of women and children, and other historically marginalized groups
- Social, economic and health policies that lead to poor living standards or socio-economic inequality
- Cultural norms that promote or glorify violence, including physical punishment
- Lack of adequate legislation

- Tolerance of violence
- Gender and social inequality in the community
- Lack of services to support women and families
- High level of unemployment

The socio-ecological model and GBV: Risk factors and positive interventions

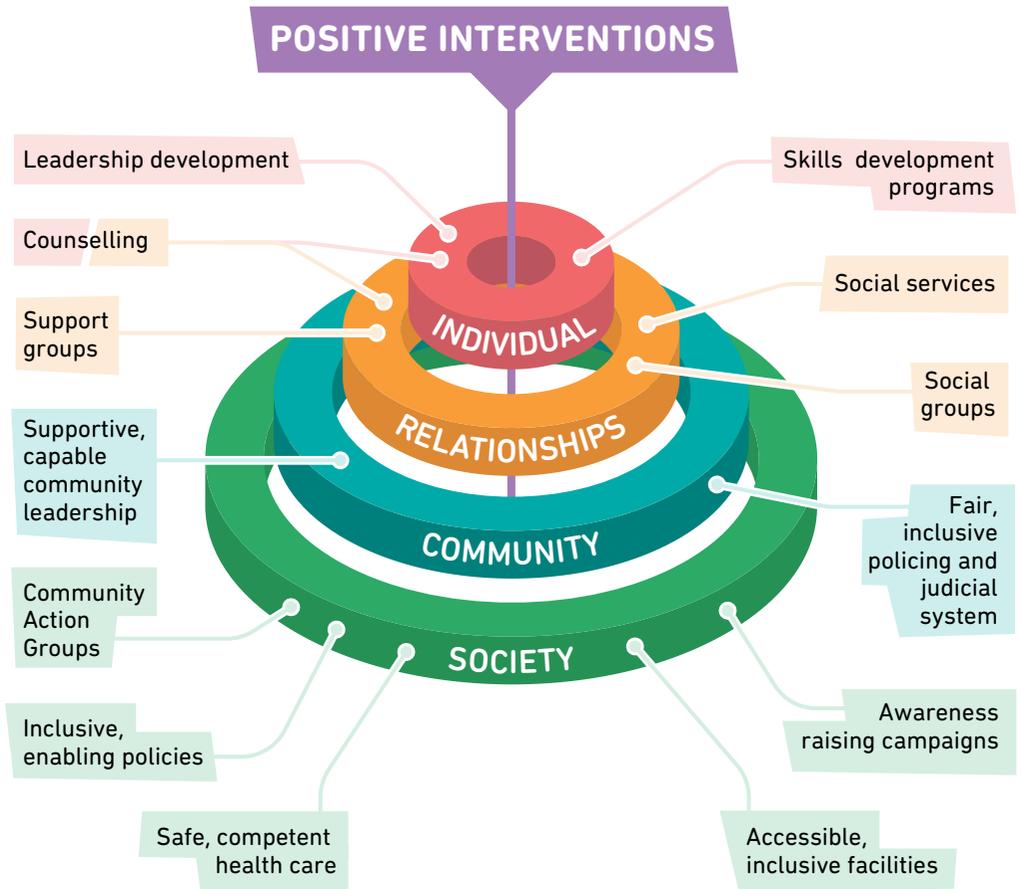


Figure 1: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979 in SPRINT Learning Network session by participants

GBV, INDIRECT STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

GBV has been increasingly recognised as an issue that requires urgent attention. Statistics show that globally, an estimated 736 million women (almost one in three) have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life. In 2018, an estimated one in seven women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband in the past 12 months. These figures are likely to be higher as fewer than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women. 2021).

Global responses that address GBV recognise the intersectional contributing factors towards this and include targeted approaches to impact the indirect structural violence that is experienced. Various policies developed to reduce GBV and the address factors that contribute to it include the following:



PROTECTION BY DECREE

The conventions, declarations, protocols and goals mentioned here highlight the dire need to address the factors that contribute towards GBV.

- The Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN Women. 1995);
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004).
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that speak to mitigating the structural violence experienced by women and girls includes: poverty (SDG 1), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) (UN. 2015).
- Aligned with this is the revised Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development (2016).

South Africa is characterised as having many of the key drivers of GBV: patriarchal cultural norms, socio-economic inequality and low levels of women's empowerment.

In South Africa, "patriarchy remains deeply entrenched within the fabric of our society to such an extent that most women consider it to be a normal way of life" (Mkhize. 2017). In terms of socio-economic inequality, "females in South Africa remain disadvantaged in terms of pay, promotion, job stability and status, and employment benefits such as pensions regardless of educational attainment" (StatsSA. 2015) compared to males. Low levels of women's empowerment speaks to the indirect structural violence that limits opportunities and possibilities that are available, or perceived to be available, for women in the country.

There is an urgent need to reduce the risk factors that contribute to GBV in South Africa. In June 2018, Stats SA released statistics showing that the murder rate for women increased by 117% between 2015 and 2016/17. The total number of women who experienced sexual offences also increased by 53% from 31,665 in 2015/16 to 70,813 in 2016/17 (UN Women. 2018). One in five (21%) partnered women has experienced physical violence by a partner (Stats SA. 2020). Almost half of assaults on women in South Africa were committed by a perpetrator that is known to the victim – friend or acquaintance (22%); spouse or intimate partner (15%); relative or other household member (13%) (Stats SA. 2020). Research by Stats SA reflected that while people refrained from ordinary daily activities due to fear of crime, women reported feeling more unsafe than men. Women reflected that they were not able to express their sexual orientation or negotiate public spaces in their neighbourhoods without risk, both during the day and at night (Stats SA. 2018).

In recent years, there has been an outpouring of anger, frustration and outrage in South Africa about GBV. In August 2018, #TotalShutdown gained momentum, with thousands of women marching to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest gender-based violence (UN Women. 2018). In September 2019, another mass protest occurred in Cape Town to show the “fear, rage and pain” at the murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana (Daily Maverick. 2019). Such examples highlight the urgency that is required in addressing GBV.

In response to the high levels of GBV, the South African government released the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) (2020) which aims to address “not just gender-based violence and femicide, but the wider challenges women and children face with regards to safety and security, poverty, access to economic opportunities, and the contestation of their rights” (NSP-GBVF. 2020).

The NSP-GBVF highlights the necessity of a “multi-sectoral approach which harnesses the roles, responsibilities, resources and commitment across government departments, different tiers of government, civil society, movements, youth structures, faith-based structures, traditional structures, the media, development agencies, the private sector, academic institutions and all other stakeholders” in the implementation of this plan.

In addition, the NSP-GBVF (2020) emphasises the importance of “inclusiveness, embracing diversity and intersectionality, recognising the importance of centering the experience of women most marginalised by poverty, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and nationality”. In addition, the Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy (2021) (ICVPS) draws from the White Paper on Safety and Security (2016) to develop a plan for

an integrated approach to violence and crime prevention. The strategy assists to strengthen systems that prevent, and respond to GBV. The ICVPS outlines six key pillars that look to approach violence and crime holistically. The various pillars include:



Early intervention to prevent crime and violence and promote safety



An effective criminal justice system



Effective and integrated service delivery for safety, security and prevention of violence



Victim support



Active public and community participation

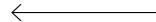


Safety through environmental design

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating impact on a global scale. The impact of this has been felt immediately, with the loss of livelihoods contributing to a resurgence in extreme poverty and severe levels of food insecurity that are likely to get worse – both of which impact women the most (UN Women. 2021). The stringent lockdown measure imposed by the South African government, while aiming to reduce the spread of the virus, reflect the global findings as having a more significant impact on women. A series of studies by NIDS-CRAM ¹ highlight that: “women were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis and the first month of the lockdown period in South Africa. Not only were they much more likely than men to lose their jobs between February ² and April [of 2020] or to work fewer hours compared to the pre-crisis period, they also took on a greater share of the additional childcare as a result of school closures and the suspension of all childcare services” (Casale and Shepherd. 2020).

While “both men and women lost jobs between February and April 2020...the net job loss was greater among women than men: Of the total net job loss between February and April (roughly 2.9 million jobs), women accounted for two-thirds” (Casale and Posel. 2020). In addition, “women also experienced a slower recovery than men as the economy started reopening” (Casale and Shepherd 2021). In January 2021, Basic Education Director-General, Mathanzima Mveli, reported that 15% of learners “could not be accounted for in the system” (Govender. 2021), such drop-out rates are likely to increase gender gaps that already exist in education (UN Women. 2021).

It has been noted that “under normal circumstances: low income, unemployment, economic stress, depression, emotional insecurity and social isolation are all risk factors for using violence against partners. Many of these factors may worsen in the context of COVID-19” (Evans. 2020). In the early stages of lockdown, increased levels of stress, linked to financial insecurity and uncertainty, along with being confined to the home, led to an increase in reports of domestic violence cases compared to the same period of the previous year (Newham and du Plessis. 2020) and this is likely to be higher due to limited opportunities to do so with



Notes:

1: The National Income Distribution Study - Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) 2020 investigates the socioeconomic impacts of the national lockdown associated with the State of Disaster declared in South Africa in March 2020, and the social and economic consequences in South Africa of the global Coronavirus pandemic. NIDS-CRAM forms part of a broader study called the Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM) which aims to inform policy using rapid reliable research on income, employment and welfare in South Africa, in the context of the global Coronavirus pandemic.

2: While South Africa’s lockdown began in March, the survey (NIDS-CRAM) asked respondents questions about the period February to April to identify the immediate impact of the pandemic on employment.

restrictions on movement and such crime being regularly underreported. There is global recognition of the severity of the impact of COVID-19 on GBV and by “September 2020, 52 countries had integrated prevention and response to violence against women and girls into COVID-19 response plans, and 121 countries had adopted measures to strengthen services for women survivors of violence during the global crisis, but more efforts are urgently needed” (UN Women. 2020).

While the need for VPIs was urgent before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the contextualisation provided here emphasise that this need has only intensified.



CSOs have played an important role in South Africa's response to GBV. With their existing networks and relationships of trust, together with their ability to work across many sectors, CSOs are strategically placed to rapidly respond to factors that contribute to GBV, including urban design, as well as socio-economic factors such as unemployment, loss of livelihoods, increased poverty etc.

LESSONS FROM THE LEARNING NETWORK

It was noted that due to the entrenched nature of gender norms, sometimes these can be overlooked. VPIs focusing on gender and GBV, particularly now, due to the added strain of COVID-19 require renewed focus. CSOs have played an important role in South Africa's response to GBV. With their existing networks and relationships of trust, together with their ability to work across many sectors, CSOs are strategically placed to rapidly respond to factors that contribute to GBV, including urban design, as well as socio-economic factors such as unemployment, loss of livelihoods, increased poverty etc.

Learning Network participants reflected on how gender dynamics play out in all spheres of society and in their work. Participants shared that in their experience, the South African society is one that is deeply rooted in cultural norms and values that ascribe different roles, attributes and possibilities to men, women, boys and girls across various cultures. These create power dynamics that are reinforced both in behaviour and mindsets of those operating within these structures. This indirect structural violence that is experienced by women is highlighted by the unequal roles for men and women, where women have to carry the additional day-to-day responsibilities of taking care of children and doing household chores, which limits their ability to focus on work and earning an income.

The complexities in shifting these mindsets requires extended interventions on multiple levels in order to create behaviour change.

Experiences of Learning Network CSOs highlighted significant income inequalities, with women earning significantly lower than men, and often having the additional responsibility to feed dependents. This is in line with research that shows that South African women earn from 54%-68% of what men earn, depending on their education level (Stats SA, 2017). A strong focus on education was

also identified as an important, long-term factor to reducing GBV; this is particularly concerning due to the drop in school enrolment due to COVID-19.

In line with the NSP-GBVF, it was emphasised that women's socio-economic empowerment is a key factor to reducing GBV as this discourages dependency and women are able to walk away from their abusers. Challenging social and cultural norms through economic empowerment is a key strategy adopted by Project Empower through their Stepping Stones Creating Futures programme.

Project Empower noted that community members have reported that IPV has significantly reduced in the communities where the programme has been run.



STEPPING STONES & CREATING FUTURES (SSCF)

Project Empower's SSCF programme focuses on two key areas: HIV and VAW. The programme works predominantly in informal settlements around eThekweni and aims to strengthen the agency of individuals and communities to create a safer, healthier environment, especially for women (Khaula. 2021). This is an intensive programme that aims to empower both women and men in the long term. Project Empower works through participatory, peer-led processes with same-sex groups over a period of 3 months (with two three-hour sessions a week). The process aims to unpack some of the psychological impact of their current context so as to move towards empowering vulnerable groups and to strengthen their sense of agency to make positive choices to create their own change.

The SSCF model was recently expanded to advocate for women and girls' inclusion

within the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) in the eThekweni Municipality. This will provide an opportunity to test whether the model can be used to build skills and finance gender-transformative and GBV preventive interventions at a broader scale. "As a result, Project Empower will advocate for the creation of a municipal level technical working group for the EPWP made up of representatives of civil society organizations, the EPWP Implementing Team, and women (ages 24-35) from townships and informal settlements (Mhlasini, Zwelisha, Bhambayi, Bottlebrush, Amaoti, Amaotana, Clare Estate, Burlington, Buffelsdraai and KwaSanti)—including the two largest townships in Durban (KwaMashu and Umlazi) and the surrounding areas within the eThekweni Municipality by September 2021. Within its first year, the technical working group is estimated to reflect the voices and needs of 10,000 women and girls residing across the eThekweni Municipality in order to increase economic opportunities for women, girls, youth, and people with disabilities." (Rise Up. N.d.)

While a significant amount of GBV occurs inside the home, a large amount also occurs in public spaces. The participants of the Learning Network shared what both a safe and inclusive public space looks like, and how this concept is considered in the implementation of their work. **Feedback specifically focusing on designing safe spaces included environments that are 'spatially legible' – that can be read easily in terms of clear purpose in terms of design, obvious resting points, boundaries, etc. Such spaces should also have easy and clear access and multiple exits. In addition, safe spaces are also rarely empty, and thus have a variety of activities built into the design, such as economic (both formal and informal), social, recreational, educational, etc.**

While safe spaces have clear, visible markers, the creation of inclusive spaces is a lot harder, and is not only about removing the dangers and risks. Participants highlighted that while public spaces are meant for everyone, not everyone feels safe or welcome in them and it is a challenge to indicate that a specific space is safe, accepting and inclusive. Women, girls, people with disabilities, the elderly and members of the LGBTQI+ community are particularly vulnerable and often feel unsafe in public spaces that are supposed to be inclusive and safe for them. Participants emphasised the need to be intentional in the creation of safe and inclusive spaces by activating these spaces through events and development programmes (e.g. for youth, young mothers, etc). Engaging the users of these spaces to ensure that a space is safe and inclusive for everyone is critical. There has to be cultural respect from the users of the space, understanding that people have different opinions, beliefs and needs that should be respected.

To create a space that feels safe and inclusive requires a collective effort from all the stakeholders of the space: government, community members, people who live adjacent to it and people passing through the space regularly. In order to plan inclusively, creating the space for women, girls, LGBTQI+ groups etc. to express their experiences, aspirations and needs for the future of the space is important.

Such participatory planning and design/redesign of the space can assist in understanding what is required from it, and aims to take into consideration those who will be using the space.

Attempting to minimise the risk that exists in public spaces comes with various challenges. The first that was noted was the difficulty of finding the balance between having systems in place that can keep out those that might challenge the safety of a space, and avoiding 'gatekeeping', or excluding others. In addition, it is difficult to design spaces that are safer specifically for women and girls without having to engage in 'gatekeeping' activities to restrict participation of those that might pose a threat. Another challenge that was experienced by the Learning Network participants was that public spaces are often not managed by people who prioritise safety, social inclusion and gender dynamics. An example of this is the prioritisation of roads and traffic flows over inclusivity and safety. A last point that was mentioned was that it is difficult to reach marginalised groups in particular when working in and with communities. Community leaders/ward councillors, as first points of contact, can sometimes act as gatekeepers and, inadvertently or deliberately, prevent marginalised groups (for example the LGBTQI+ community) from participating. In addition, the 'snowball method' is often used to identify role-players in communities, who then identify other key members; however, this can further serve to cement power structures and further marginalise already marginalised groups.

It is difficult to design spaces that are safer specifically for women and girls without having to engage in 'gatekeeping' activities to restrict participation of those that might pose a threat.

KEY MESSAGES

In addressing the complex issue of GBV, an intersectional approach is required, particularly one that acknowledges the various socio-ecological factors that contribute to GBV. Key areas to acknowledge are included below.

Placing gender at the centre of VPIs should be prioritised, particularly in light of the significant impact of COVID-19. One of the keyways to reduce GBV is through the economic empowerment of women and reducing socio-economic inequalities between men and women. Acknowledging that gender is associated with power dynamics and utilising a gender lens in the implementation of the work can have a significant impact on reducing poverty and the violence that is experienced by many vulnerable groups. Essential to consider is the recognition that those in positions of power often resist efforts that could result in a loss of power, and actively participate in efforts to maintain the system that reinforces their power.

It is important to have a systems approach in understanding structural inequality and the realities of GBV and positioning VPIs. Efforts to change cultural norms and values come from diverse, complementary and integrated interventions. Activation programmes around youth, social well-being, employment and economic empowerment can assist with catalysing VPIs. In order to have a lasting impact, CSOs should find partners and work towards similar outcomes around safety and inclusion.

The built environment has a significant role to play in combating GBV in public spaces. VPIs in such spaces should be done in partnership with the community as those affected or at risk are best placed to identify risks and crime 'hot spots' in their area. More significantly, partnerships with communities should prioritise engagement with those who are most vulnerable to GBV, e.g. women, girls, LGBTQI+ communities and their interest groups.

A final point to note is that all approaches to designing VPIs targeting GBV should be holistic and integrated. Engaging with community members, particularly vulnerable groups, should be underpinned by respect, inclusion and acceptance.

The built environment has a significant role to play in combating GBV in public spaces. VPIs in such spaces should be done in partnership with the community as those affected or at risk are best placed to identify risks and crime 'hot spots' in their area.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the lives of people in South Africa, impacting people's livelihoods, safety, trauma and increased vulnerability.

The pandemic has exposed gender inequality in the country and exacerbated the risk factors that contribute to GBV (economic inequality, poverty, low levels of women's empowerment etc.). Patriarchal norms and values, and the indirect structural violence further increases the risk for women, children and other vulnerable groups. South Africa's high levels of violence and crime reflect the urgent need to address the drivers of GBV in the country. The SPRINT Project aims to strengthen the response from CSOs, municipalities and other relevant stakeholders to the growing levels of crime and violence, and the amplified risk factors for violence and crime in vulnerable communities.

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