

## Background

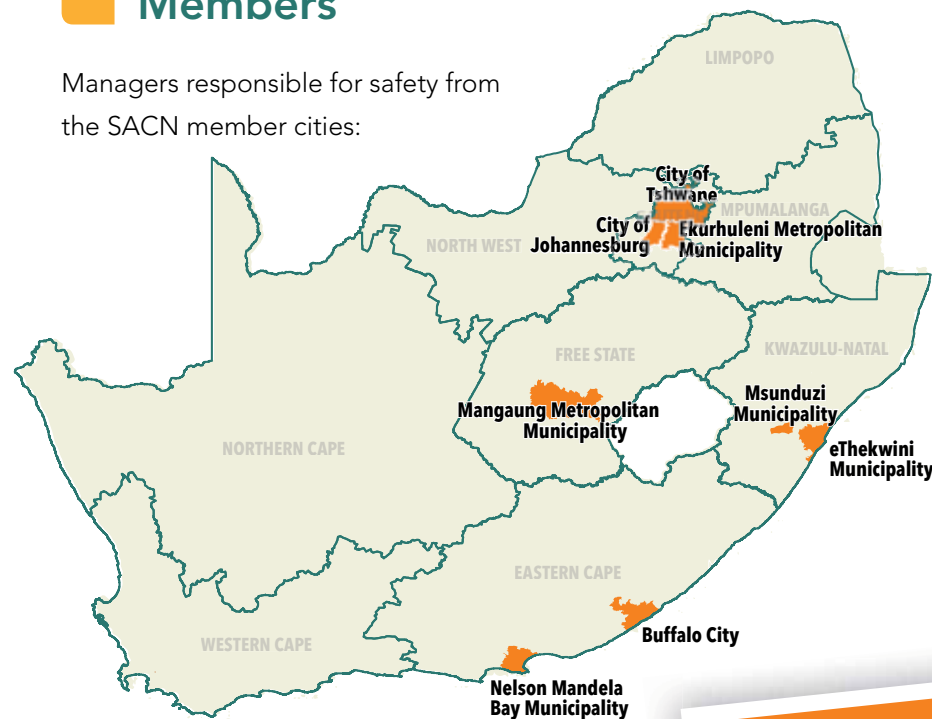
Cities are places of opportunities but also often places marked by inequality and high levels of violence and crime. Cities of the global South, in particular, share similar experiences in terms of the types and drivers of crime and violence prevailing in them. South African cities are no exception. The high incidence of crime and violence in cities stems from a number of factors, including extreme inequality, social and spatial exclusion, unemployment, insufficient access to basic and social services, and inadequately managed urban growth.

Given the concentration of violence and crime in cities and urban centres in South Africa, and the major impact this has on social, economic and cultural opportunities for residents, improving urban safety should be a priority for the country. There is a need to better understand how cities and local governments in South Africa can make a more effective contribution to the *prevention* of violence and crime through holistic strategies that address the social and economic drivers of violence.



## Members

Managers responsible for safety from the SACN member cities:



Representatives of relevant national government institutions:

- Department of Cooperative Governance
- South African Local Government Association
- National Treasury
- Department of Social Development
- Civilian Secretariat for Police

**For more information please contact**  
South African Cities Network  
urbansafety@sacities.net  
Tel: +27 (0)11 407 6471

**Or visit:**  
[www.sacities.net](http://www.sacities.net)  
[www.safterspaces.org.za](http://www.safterspaces.org.za)



## urban safety reference group

## Objectives

The Urban Safety Reference Group intends to:

- serve as a platform for **peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing** amongst practitioners on urban safety;
- provide a space for **regular interaction and networking** between city practitioners and national departments directly relevant to the governance of urban safety;
- serve as a mechanism to identify topical matters requiring **lobbying and interaction** with other spheres of government, the private sector and other stakeholders; and
- provide a contact point for **structured engagement** between South African municipalities and international urban safety networks.





## Urban Safety Reference Group

Although local practitioners and many government officials in South Africa face similar challenges in addressing urban safety, there have been few opportunities for a structured exchange on urban safety issues among cities, and with relevant national government stakeholders.

The Urban Safety Reference Group (USRG) was established in early 2014 as a way to rectify this gap. It constitutes the first institutionalised forum in South Africa that enables practice-based learning on the theme of urban safety and violence prevention to inform urban policy, planning and management. It has proven to be a valuable and important platform for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing amongst practitioners from the South African Cities Network (SACN) member cities as well as other key government role-players on urban safety and violence prevention.

The USRG is premised on the unique position of local government to play a leading role in driving developmental approaches to preventing violence and crime that complement and extend beyond conventional security approaches such as policing, law enforcement or the reliance on private security firms.

The USRG also provides a basis for cities to collectively raise the profile of the topic of urban safety nationally, and advocates for necessary policy, legislative, institutional or fiscal reforms to empower cities and local government more generally to make an even more pro-active contribution to violence and crime prevention.

The USRG is convened by the SACN with the support of the Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Programme. The VCP Programme is a joint South African-German intervention coordinated by the South African Department of Cooperative Governance and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

## Main activities



### Peer-to-peer learning

The primary vehicle for peer learning between the members of the USRG is the meetings of the group, which take place quarterly and rotate voluntarily between member cities. The format usually consists of a one-and-a-half day session, including an exposure visit within the host municipality.



### Knowledge Generation and Sharing

The focus of the USRG research programme has been to develop a set of urban safety indicators for the South African context that provide the basis for comparison, assessment, and planning between cities. This research will culminate in the first-of-its-kind *State of Urban Safety in South Africa Report*. The practice-based learning and recommendations emanating from the meetings of the group are also captured in the report.



### Advocacy

The USRG has made submissions to inform various national policy processes, such as the Integrated Urban Development Framework, and the White Paper on Safety and Security.

Through a quarterly policy brief, the USRG provides commentaries and recommendations on policy implications related to a variety of topics.



### Technical capacity building

The USRG facilitates access for its members to training opportunities to further enhance technical capacities relevant to urban safety in cities.



### Promoting innovation

Through a small grant innovation fund, the USRG encourages and supports the development or implementation of innovative practices, approaches or initiatives that could contribute to enhanced urban safety in member cities.



### Fostering South-South Learning and Cooperation

In 2014 the USRG undertook an extensive exposure visit to Brazil and Colombia, which included participation in the World Urban Forum. Insights and lessons learnt were captured in a comprehensive report, which has been widely disseminated.

Through the USRG, members have also had the opportunity to participate in various conferences and seminars where they have engaged on international experiences and research.

