

Published by:
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention for Safe Public Spaces (VCP) Programme

The entire toolkit is available on: www.saferspaces.org.za

TOOL ONE

TIMELINE³



Objective:

To depict the main changes in the experiences of youth violence, listing them chronologically along a time axis.

To get participants to see the situation of violence against the background of other changes in the broader context.



Aspects of Data Collection:

History, background and extent of youth violence experienced in the ward, village, neighbourhood.



Material needed:

Flipchart paper or big brown paper, various markers, pins, glue and/or cello tape.



Preparation:

The timeline is excellent for showing different perspectives on the violence situation, and people's different experiences of it. **It is advisable to pay careful attention to group composition** because time and again we see that different groups:

- remember different events
- explain certain developments differently, such as the escalation or de-escalation of violence.

Also, as facilitator you should prepare an example of a timeline with some years and imaginary changes on a flipchart. The left hand side of the flipchart should show a scale that goes from high to low or from 1 to ten, where 1 would be low and 10 very high. Any event shown on your example would then be placed lower or higher. This will show escalation or de-escalation of violence.



Procedure:

1. Identify an appropriate starting year, together with the participants. (For example, you can start the discussion to find a starting year by asking the question(s): when did violence become an issue for you? When did it all begin, and how? When did it start to get worse/bad?)
2. Divide the participants into groups of about 6-8 people. Make sure the groups get your support as facilitator when they need it.

3. *This and many other tools in this toolkit even when not stated explicitly stated are adapted from the huge pool of existing PRA/RRA tools.*

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**Tasks for the group work:**

1. Draw a straight line at the bottom of the paper. Put at the left end the year which we have just defined in the plenary. Put today's date at the other end of the line. This is your timeline.
2. Discuss the most important changes since the agreed starting year; then mark on the line the respective years and a short description of the change.
3. Some helpful questions **to consider during group work** might be: Were there any times when violence worsened in the neighbourhood? Are there any events that you associate with those times? Have there been any other important changes? Have there been any major conflicts in the community, e.g., between groups or neighbourhoods? Have there been times when violence against women was lower or higher?

Allow 30 minutes for the timeline and check during the group work whether the groups need more or less time. Then call everybody back to the plenary.

1. Each group hangs its result on the wall, so that the papers hang side by side.
2. For the discussion in the plenary you can ask questions like:
Do you have any observations regarding the results you see?
3. Discuss with the participants the causes of individual events, and cover the important (political, psychological etc.) causes and consequences. These are the kind of questions you could ask to get the discussion going: Why do you think young people become violent? What effects does violence have on the people of your neighbourhood, on men, women, youth and children?).

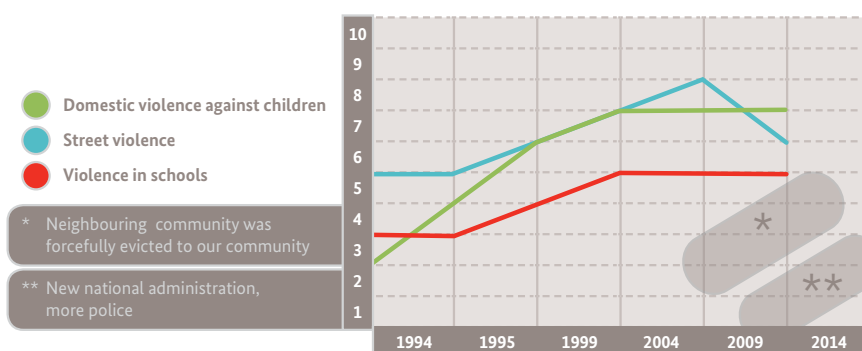


Figure 5: Timeline for three different kinds of violence and their extent, as perceived by members of a focus group

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Figure 4 shows the results of group work, in which each of three groups discussed one form of violence. The separate group results were visualised separately in the groups and combined in one diagram afterwards.

The blue, red and green lines show the extent of different forms of violence, as perceived by the members of each group, and expressed during their discussion. The vertical axe shows the extent of violence (10= high, 5 = medium, 1 = low) and the horizontal axe shows the timeline. Specific events or developments which the group members see in relation to violence in their neighbourhood/community were added explicitly. Participants can add much more information than shown in figure 4.



Observations: (Additional notes for the facilitator)

Participants can add very different types of changes. Changes shown on the Timeline can include: the introduction of relevant laws; economic crises; first emergence of a youth gang; events connected to organised crime; demographic changes; big construction projects in the neighbourhood; migration flows, major changes in land ownership, political changes, etc.

You can also use the time line for aspects like the 'feeling of safety'.

Allow different perspectives and avoid discussions on what is wrong or right. At this stage, we respect everyone's perceptions and understanding of important changes.



End Product:

By the end of the exercise, the objectives set have been achieved, including the following:

- Various timelines representing different perspectives on changes relevant for violence over a certain period of time have been depicted.
- The participants have discussed the situation of violence against the background of other changes in the broader context.

