

# The **Violence** **Prevention** Forum

Evidence | Collaboration | Trust

## Terms of Reference

### Purpose of the Violence Prevention Forum

Preventing violence is not only a practical imperative for South Africa, it is also a statutory and policy imperative for a number of government departments including the Departments of Social Development, Women, Youth and People with Disabilities, Health, Basic Education, and the SAPS. National Treasury and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation share the responsibility for ensuring that programming to prevent violence not only meets the objectives of the National Development Plan, but also offers the best results at the lowest cost. Non-governmental organisations deliver a significant number of programmes and interventions to prevent and respond to violence around the country, and the research community undertakes work to document and understand what drives violence and its impact, and to evaluate interventions. Other sectors, such as the private sector, also have an important role to play in preventing violence.

Underpinning the Violence Prevention Forum is the idea that South Africa cannot afford to spend state or donor funds on programmes that are either ineffective or inadvertently cause more harm. It is thus imperative for *inter alia* non-governmental organisations, researchers, government departments and development partners to find new ways of communicating and working, to be able to take advantage of the growing number of programmes and interventions that aim to reduce violence and for which we have evidence of effect.

Violence prevention programmes and interventions are those that have as an intended outcome the reduction or prevention of violence and conflict, and that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Strengthen core life skills (inter/intra personal),
- Build healthy relationships
- Reduce sources of stress (interpersonal and systemic)
- Heal trauma, and
- Are transformative

Violence prevention, according to the definition developed in 2021 is:

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

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## Objectives of the Forum

The Violence Prevention Forum's long-term objective is to enable multi-sectoral collaboration to ensure that effective programmes and interventions to prevent violence are available and sustained across the country in communities where they are needed.

The Violence Prevention Forum has the following medium-term objectives

- To achieve a common understanding of what we mean by 'prevention' and the spectrum of interventions required to address the factors that perpetuate cycles of violence.
- To share and disseminate information about policies, programmes and interventions to prevent violence that have been developed and are being tested in South Africa.
- To achieve a common understanding and agreed definition of what we mean by 'evidence' of programme effect.
- To provide a space within which strong, healthy relationships can be built across sectors with the purpose of enabling the scale-up of evidence-led programmes, when appropriate.
- To share insights from programmes that are positively evaluated to inform interventions by government and civil society.
- To identify what is needed to enable the scale-up of interventions and to work towards creating the conditions within which this is possible.
- To promote an integrated approach to address violence. In this case 'integrated' refers to an approach that brings coherence and alignment to the services provided at community-level by government and NGOs.

The Violence Prevention Forum is a dynamic and iterative process, as such its objectives may be revised by participants when necessary.

## History of the Forum

The Violence Prevention Forum held its first meeting in 2015 and has met twice a year since then. The Forum (initially named the Dialogue Forum for evidence-based programmes to prevent violence against women and children) was initiated by the Institute for Security Studies and UNICEF. These organisations noticed that there were few opportunities for government officials, NGOs and academics to share ideas, knowledge and experiences, outside of formal conferences or meetings. They hypothesised that this was one of the factors that hinders the scale-up of evidence-based violence prevention programmes. The Forum has grown and evolved since then to meet the needs and interests of a multi-sectoral community that is committed to preventing violence.

Members of the Forum contribute to publications that represent collective deliberation and analysis. By the end of 2022 these included:

1. [Reducing violence in South Africa: from policing to prevention](#)
2. [Reducing violence in South Africa: resourcing violence prevention](#)
3. [Reducing violence in South Africa: from research to action](#)
4. [Reducing violence in South Africa: Multi-sectoral collaboration for scalable solutions](#)
5. [What will it take to prevent interpersonal violence in South Africa](#)
6. [Shared value: how business can support children to prevent violence.](#)

7. [Evidence-led violence prevention: principles and guidelines for practice](#)
8. [How violence against women and children is represented in research](#)
9. [An evidence review of violence prevention in South Africa](#)
10. [What is violence prevention: a new definition](#)
11. [How violence and adversity undermine human development](#)

## Participation in the Violence Prevention Forum

In order for the Forum to achieve its objectives the right mix of people and institutions need to participate in meetings of the Forum. Participation is not static. It varies from meeting to meeting depending on the availability of institutional representatives and the subject of the meeting.

Participants should not only represent relevant stakeholders, but should be individuals who have the requisite authority and decision-making ability to be able to bring about change and drive new processes within their institutions, or have specialist knowledge relevant to a particular meeting of the Forum. Participants should have a solutions-oriented approach and a desire to contribute towards realising the long-term goal of implementing evidence-based programmes at scale.

Participants will be stakeholders from relevant national and provincial government departments, research institutions (including universities, NGOs and parastatal research organisations), development partners/international organisations, representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organisations who share the vision of the Forum.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- The Departments of Social Development, Women, Youth and People with Disabilities, Basic Education, Health, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, SAPS, Department of Justice and National Treasury; and any other departments that have a mandate to increase safety or reduce and prevent violence.
- Non-governmental organisations that are implementing or evaluating violence prevention programmes.
- Researchers who are evaluating, or have evaluated violence prevention programmes or who have knowledge and skills relevant to the Forum.
- Individuals who share a commitment to the objectives of the forum and have specific expertise, knowledge or skills to contribute.
- International organisations that play an active role in supporting programmes and policies that aim to prevent and reduce violence.
- Representatives of companies that are contributing to the prevention of violence.

Since meetings of the Violence Prevention Forum are necessarily interactive, the number of participants at any one meeting will be restricted to no more than 35, unless the Driver Group decides otherwise.

## Governance

The Forum is convened by the Institute for Security Studies in collaboration with partners that contribute financially or in-kind to meetings. As convenor the ISS is primarily responsible for:

- Fund raising
- Ensuring that meetings take place
- Ensuring that reports are produced and circulated to participants
- Working with a facilitation team to determine and decide on a process for each meeting.

Other members of the forum, and particularly members of the driver group have a responsibility to contribute towards the resourcing of the Forum.

A Driver Group consisting of *inter alia* representatives from government departments, NGOs, research institutions and development partners determines the strategic direction of the Violence Prevention Forum. Representatives self-select and remain members of the Driver Group for as long as they (or their institutions) are committed participants in the Forum.

The Driver Group should at all times include representatives from government departments, NGOs and research institutions. It should not consist of more than 12 members or less than five. The Driver Group provides strategic direction for the Forum. The Group debriefs after all Violence Prevention Forum meetings, and prepares for upcoming meetings. The Driver Group may take decisions about the content and composition of Violence Prevention Forum meetings, and about representation of the Forum in events and meetings.

Driver group members who change their position (i.e. leave the organisation that they represented) and who wish to remain a member of the driver group may do so if the Driver group so decides. Such a decision will be informed on a proper assessment of the case, and with the objective of ensuring the maximum value for the Forum.

Membership of the driver group will be terminated if a member has not attended at least two meetings of the group in a year without good reasons having been provided.

A member of the driver group must have attended at least one meeting of the Forum before they can become a driver group member.

Members of the driver group are responsible for ensuring continuity and succession by ensuring that they include colleagues in VPF meetings, as relevant and appropriate.

The Driver group may invite *ad hoc* participation in driver group meetings, as necessary and appropriate.

### Meeting methods and frequency

The Forum meets twice a year for two days at a time. Additional meetings may be held with sub-groups participating in the Forum as and when necessary. The duration and frequency of the meetings may vary according to the funding available and needs of the process and participants.

Forum meetings are facilitated in such a way as to enable maximum participation and deep reflection. The aim of the facilitators is to create a respectful, productive, nurturing microcosm, to model of what we would like to see in broader society.

Facilitation of Forum meetings focuses on:

- Relationship-building between participants (levelling of hierarchies)
- Knowledge building (a thinking environment)

- Self-reflection
- Honest conversation

Values that participants have reached consensus over are the joint responsibility of all to uphold. These values are revisited each time the Forum meets, and some may change over time. The core values are: **respect, fun, active listening, commitment, collaboration and partnership, empathy and deep democracy.**

To enable the growth of relationships and the deepening of knowledge in this sector, participants are required to be present for the full two days of the Forum meeting. Participants sit in circle and are discouraged from have laptops open during processes. Information is presented in discussion, with PowerPoint slides used only when absolutely necessary, such as in the presentation of figures or graphs.

Capacity-building and training of new facilitators is an integral part of our process and helps ensure sustainability of the facilitation methodology.