

# THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality



social development

Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SAFETY AND  
VIOLENCE  
INITIATIVE

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE - PROMOTING SAFETY



children's  
institute  
child rights in focus  
Research • Advocacy • Education



for every child

## Theme: Health

### Action Dialogue on Intersectoral Action to Reduce Violence Against Children (May 2017)

Lucy Jamieson<sup>1</sup>

“In the face of increasingly concentrated wealth in South Africa, investment in children is a powerful force for greater equality.”<sup>i</sup>

#### 1. What are the major issues you have identified about the manifestations of structural poverty and persistent, deep inequalities?

Violence against children (VAC) is widespread. The 2016 Optimus Study on child abuse, violence and neglect concluded that 42% of children had experienced some form of violence and that there was no gender difference in reported experiences of sexual abuse.<sup>ii</sup> Exposure to abuse, neglect and other forms of violence affects children’s health, social and psychological well-being, and increases their risk of mental health problems and substance abuse.<sup>iii</sup> Violence also impairs children’s cognitive development and impedes children’s ability to succeed at school and achieve their potential.<sup>iv</sup> This impacts on children’s ability to realise their full potential throughout their life course.

The absence of safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments changes the brain architecture and function.<sup>v</sup> These changes manifest in different ways, varying by age, gender and temperament<sup>vi</sup> and may include

#### About this brief

This brief was commissioned by the Mandela Initiative to help inform a synthesis report on its work since the 2012 national conference, *Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality*, organised by the University of Cape Town. The MI provides a multi-sectoral platform to investigate and develop strategies to overcome poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa. While the Nelson Mandela Foundation is a key partner, the Initiative has relied on collaborations between academics and researchers, government, business leaders, civil society, the church and unions.

The synthesis report serves as a framework for reporting on the work of the MI at a national gathering on 12 – 14 February 2018 at the University of Cape Town. The MI *Think Tank* has identified the objectives for the gathering as:

- to anchor the contributions of the MI within an analysis of the current South African political and economic context;
- to share the recommendations emanating from the MI-related work streams at a policy/strategic level to advance the goal of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality;
- to critically engage with the potential impact of the recommendations on eliminating structural poverty and inequality; and
- to discuss ways of promoting popular conversations and debate about what needs to be done to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, beyond the MI.

The synthesis report aims to assist participants to prepare for the national gathering. The report drew on findings from the sectoral research projects of Think Tank members; the MI’s *Action Dialogues*; a report on an MI *Community of Practice workshop* with research chairs from different universities to identify cross-cutting themes emerging from the MI’s *research programme*; and the work programmes of others who have expressed an interest in contributing to the goals of the MI.

<sup>1</sup> Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town

# THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

*Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality*



uncooperative and defiant behaviour as pre-schoolers; hitting others, bullying or lying in middle childhood; stealing, truancy, alcohol or drug use and involvement in crime and violence in adolescence; reckless driving, erratic work history, multiple and unstable relationships, partner violence, carrying a weapon, and the continuation of crime and violence into adulthood.<sup>vii</sup>

Experiencing violence as a child impacts on an individual's ability to bond with their own children and to parent effectively; therefore, it contributes to an intergenerational cycle of violence and poverty. As a result of lost potential and the extra burden on services, violence against children cost South Africa an estimated R238 billion – or 6% of the gross domestic product – in 2015.<sup>viii</sup> Violence also undermines efforts to promote social cohesion and to build a peaceful and prosperous nation.

## **2. What do you think are the main reasons for the persistence of the deep inequalities and poverty [in your focus area(s)]? These can include policy, capacity or implementation constraints/problems.**

The causes of violence are complex and the web of interrelated risks needs to be understood to identify protective factors that can enhance resilience in children.<sup>ix</sup> Poverty and unemployment compromise parents' ability to fulfill children's rights and to support their optimal development. Other contributing factors include poor living conditions, mental health and substance abuse; exposure to crime and violence in the home and community, and collectively these increase the chances of abandonment, abuse and neglect. A weak culture of law enforcement, rapid urbanisation, inadequate housing and poor education outcomes all contribute to social dynamics that fuel violence.<sup>x</sup> Additionally, South Africa's colonial past and the legacy of apartheid have normalised violence and created widespread social acceptance. Violence against women and children is legitimised as a means of maintaining men in a position of power and control.<sup>xi</sup> These social norms are carried forward from one generation to the next.

The Constitution guarantees children's rights to protection from abuse and neglect, and to freedom from all forms of violence. South Africa has a comprehensive legal framework that establishes a multi-agency child protection system – 11 different government departments, led by the Department of Social Development, have responsibilities to address VAC, whilst non-profits organisations provide the bulk of services. The goal of this system is to create a safe and enabling environment for children. However, the Diagnostic Review of Government's Response to Violence Prevention against Women and Children identified a major "implementation gap": violence against children is not a priority; the child protection system is inadequately funded; there is a shortage of skilled staff; and lack of oversight and coordination is poor.<sup>xii</sup>

South Africa now has a growing evidence base that outlines what can be done to prevent violence against children, but there are very few non-governmental organisations or networks that have a national footprint, and the capacity to take evidence-based programmes to scale.

# THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

*Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality*



social development

Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SAFETY AND  
VIOLENCE  
INITIATIVE

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE • PROMOTING SAFETY



children's  
institute  
child rights in focus  
Research • Advocacy • Education

unicef  
for every child

### 3. What is being recommended at a macro policy/strategic level to deal with the major issues you have identified?

If we are serious about ensuring that South Africa's children reach their full potential, then it is imperative that we invest in creating safer homes, schools and communities. South Africa needs a systematic approach to prevent and manage VAC in a manner that respects human rights. Violence against children of all ages can be interrupted through carefully designed, multi-faceted prevention strategies drawing on evidence-based programmes and taking these to scale. The Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) is currently reviewing the National Programme of Action addressing violence against women and children (POA), and the action dialogue afforded civil society and academics an opportunity to engage with recommend critical components for inclusion:

- I. **Building national commitment (political will):** Recognition that this is a national emergency of epidemic proportions (Alex Buchardt, WHO). This requires a partnership between government, civil society organisation, academics and business to move the agenda forward – it requires efforts from all sectors of society including religious bodies.
- II. **An inclusive POA:** The new POA should respond to the analysis of need and system assessments, e.g. DPME's diagnostic review and the WHO readiness study. It should include a basket of services drawn from a selection of evidence-based programmes tailored to local needs. The basket should include universal programmes tackling social norms; community and school-based prevention and early interventions; and response services and minimum core services that the state must provide to survivors. Additionally, there should be a focus on structural interventions to reduce levels of poverty.
- III. **Financing:** We need to secure a sustained funding base for programmes that address the intersecting challenges facing children throughout the lifecycle. Before we can align public and private funding, we must estimate the cost; then business and the civil society organisations that deliver services need to jointly develop a multi-sectoral strategic funding plan. Parliament to revive gendered and child focused budgeting.
- IV. **Development of human resources:** Including care, support and supervision; minimum qualifications and developing measures of accountability; understanding responsibilities for example trauma awareness.
- V. **Working together:** Intersectoral collaboration is also essential to strengthen service delivery at the local level. Children and their families should receive an integrated package of quality support services, which requires removing barriers to access and strengthen the interconnections between services to ensure a seamless experience for children of all ages.

# THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

*Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality*



social development

Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SAFETY AND  
VIOLENCE  
INITIATIVE

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE • PROMOTING SAFETY



children's  
institute

child rights in focus  
Research • Advocacy • Education



for every child

- VI. **Implementation and evaluation:** Academics are collaborating with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to develop robust, evidence-informed programmes to address risk factors, e.g., Parenting for Lifelong Health, but they withdraw support at the end of the evaluation phase. They need to continue to provide knowledge and support during scale-up.

Three such examples include:

- the evaluation of a gender-based violence prevention programme in Diepsloot, by Sonke Gender Justice and the University of the Witwatersrand;
- a project to determine whether a whole community's approach to parenting can be shifted positively through a social activation process and the delivery of four parenting programmes, by the University of Cape Town, the Institute for Security Studies and the Seven Passes Initiative; and
- the evaluation of the Sinovuyo Teen Parenting Programme in the Eastern Cape, a collaboration between Clowns Without Borders, the National Association of Child Care Workers, UNICEF and the Department of Social Development.

- VII. **Data systems and monitoring:** Strengthen surveillance systems, such as the National Child Protection Register, and ensuring interoperability of police data, social services, health and home affairs data. Develop indicators about both prevalence and response and use surveillance data to monitor.
- VIII. **Accountability:** DPME recommended an oversight body to ensure better alignment and coordination between policy-makers and implementing departments.
- IX. **Pathfinder country status:** The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children has been launched by a range of UN agencies and international NGOs, with Pathfinder countries provided with technical support and access to funds to attain this goal. The Government of South Africa should sign on to become a pathfinder country.

*UPDATE: On 12 December 2017, South Africa became a Pathfinder country and is sending a delegation to the Global Partnership's End Violence Solutions Summit in February 2018.*

## **What do you think the potential impact of the recommendations will be on eliminating structural poverty and reducing inequality?**

Ensuring that children are safe and protected from violence will allow them to develop to their full potential and unlock substantial human potential. Violence impacts on educational outcomes, if children can learn when they go to school and get a decent job when they grow up, then South Africa would have fuller employment, and greater economic growth. In other words, creating an environment in which *all* children are free from violence would contribute to social and economic transformation, sowing the seeds for a more equitable, safer society and a more sustainable future.

# THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

*Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality*



## For more information on the Mandela Initiative:



<sup>i</sup> Harrison D, (2017) Investing in children: The drivers of national transformation in South Africa. In: Jamieson L, Berry L & Lake L (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2017*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT.

<sup>ii</sup> Burton P, Ward CL, Artz L & Leoschut L (2016) *The Optimus Study on Child Abuse, Violence and Neglect in South Africa (Research Report)*. Cape Town: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention & UCT.

<sup>iii</sup> Fang X, Fry DA, Ganz G, Casey T & Ward CL (2016) *The Social and Economic Burden of Violence against Children in South Africa*. South Africa: Georgia State University, and Universities of Cape Town and Edinburgh.

<sup>iv</sup> See no. ii above.

<sup>v</sup> Ward C, van der Merwe A & Dawes A (2012) *Youth Violence Sources and Solutions in South Africa*. Cape Town: UCT Press.

<sup>vi</sup> Karr-Morse RM & Wiley MS (1997) *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

<sup>vii</sup> Gould C (2015) *Beaten Bad: The Life Stories of Violent Offenders*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies; Mathews S, Jewkes R & Abrahams N (2011) 'I had a hard life': Exploring childhood adversity in shaping masculinities among men who killed an intimate Partner in South Africa. *British Journal of Criminology*, 51, 960-977.

<sup>viii</sup> See no. ii above.

<sup>ix</sup> Mathews S, Govender R, Lamb G, Boonzaier F, Dawes A, Ward C, Duma S, Baraecke L, Warton G, Artz L, Meer T, Jamieson L, Smith R & Röhrs S (2016) *Towards a More Comprehensive Understanding of the Direct and Indirect Determinants of Violence against Women and Children in South Africa with a View to Enhancing Violence Prevention*. Cape Town: Safety and Violence Initiative, UCT.

<sup>x</sup> See no. ix above.

<sup>xi</sup> Mathews S & Benvenuti P, (2014) Violence against children in South Africa: Developing a prevention agenda. In: Mathews S, Jamieson L, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2014*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT.

<sup>xii</sup> Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation & Department of Social Development (2016) *Diagnostic Review of the State Response to Violence against Women and Children*. Pretoria: DPME.