Gender-based gun violence policy paper: South Africa case study

Developed for: IM Sweden

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Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
DVA	Domestic Violence Act (no. 116 of 1998)
FCA	Firearms Control Act (no. 60 of 2000)
GBV	Gender-based violence
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex
PCOP	Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Police
SA	South Africa
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
SAPS	South African Police Service
TCC	Thuthuzela Care Centre
VAW	Violence against women
ZAR	South African Rand

Summary

Recognising the lack of women and LGBTQI voices in international disarmament discussions, IM Sweden commissioned a series of country case studies to raise the voices of women and LGBTQI gun violence survivors and activists.

In South Africa, Gun Free South Africa, an NGO that works to reduce gun violence to create a safer and more secure country, was appointed to undertake a literature review and series of interviews with survivors and activists to help fill gaps in our understanding of armed violence.

Literature review: Gender-based gun violence in South Africa

South Africa is among a small group of non-conflict-affected countries that suffer a great concentration of lethal violence as a result of issues including high socioeconomic inequality; social norms that support and legitimise the use of violence, in particular male-on-male violence; wide exposure of children to violence, resulting in the 'intergenerational cycling' of violence; and weak law enforcement, including legislation controlling firearms.

Patriarchy and gun violence affect men and women in different ways. In South Africa, the majority of licensed gun owners are older white men who own firearms for self-defence. Men are also the primary victims of gun violence – accounting for 89% of total firearm homicides in the country; the majority of whom are young black men, aged 15–29 years, who live in urban areas and who are victimised by other young black men with illegal guns.

Although women make up just 11% of all gun-related murder victims, firearms, especially licensed firearms, play a significant role in violence against women (VAW), most notably in the killing of intimate female partners.

Both black and white South Africans share strongly patriarchal cultures which endorse their respective gun cultures and gender hierarchies, positioning women as subordinate. These norms convey the idea that men need to protect women from other men's violence and support male gun ownership while making women potentially legitimate targets.

Although there is no disaggregated data on gun violence by sexual orientation and gender identity, hate violence claims the lives of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) at a disproportionate rate.

South Africa's national gun law, the Firearms Control Act (FCA) of 2000 was passed at a time of enormous social and political change in the country. As with other laws passed at the time, the FCA includes a gender focus. Looking at gendered impacts specifically, the implementation of the FCA contributed to a significant decrease in firearm-related intimate femicide between 1999 and 2009. This significant reduction in firearm-related femicide is consistent with an overall decrease in firearm-related deaths over the same period, with gun deaths almost halving from 34 deaths per day in 1998 to 18 per day in 2009.

Yet, since 2011, SA's murder rate has increased every year; 58 murders per day were recorded in 2019–20, a rate of 36 per 100,000 population. This upward trend is reflected in firearm-related homicides, with an average of 23 gun deaths per day. The steady increase in firearm-related violence can be linked to a breakdown in the national firearms control regime. Poor enforcement and compliance has created a vacuum leading to the increased availability of weapons. The control regime has suffered from both fraud and corruption within the firearms management system, as well as poor stockpile management and under-resourcing.

For advocates of strong gun laws, the lesson is clear: Policymaking is only the first step in the process. Sustained political engagement is needed to fully implement and enforce gun control laws, because they will continue to face opposition from special interest groups. Moreover, despite the increased participation of women in policy and legislative processes, the shared patriarchal culture within the legislative arena has been sufficiently strong enough to remove language on the need to protect women in their homes, with the explicit norm asserted that the private domain should not be legislated.

Research: Methodology

Six interviews were conducted with women, two gun violence survivors and four activists working to build safer communities. Interviews were conducted to help fill gaps in our understanding of gender-based armed violence and its prevention in South Africa.

Research: Findings

Findings were categorised using the World Health Organization's socio-ecological model of violence prevention which distinguishes between risk and protective factors for violence at four levels: Individual, relationship, community and society.

Individual

Interviewees described how social identity, particularly race and gender, are linked to power, and impact on fear of and experiences of violence, which in SA is increasingly armed. Despite differences linked to social identity, under democracy heterosexual men, irrespective of race, have considerably more power than women; with women bearing the brunt of inequality, poverty, discrimination and unemployment, which limits their choices. A history and culture of violence has also meant that South Africa as a nation and as individuals is deeply traumatised, with high levels of structural and interpersonal violence that pass from adult to child. Until inequalities tied to social identity are addressed at a structural level, violence and trauma will continue to cycle through generations. That said, various interventions can help protect an individual from violence, including having accessible and effective trauma services, which are integral to violence prevention, yet are massively underfunded in South Africa.

Interpersonal

The strength and quality of relationships within a family and with friends, as well as having interpersonal skills to deal with conflict can help protect against armed violence. Yet relationships are often strained, with parents in particular, not 'showing up' for their children, though this is often due to structural factors e.g. poverty. Interventions aimed at improving interpersonal relationships would help build resilience.

Community

Communities are particularly vulnerable when disadvantages are concentrated, there are high levels of illegal drug trade, high rates of gun carrying and use and community disempowerment; all or a combination of these characterise the communities of Alexandra, Atlantis and Manenberg, where three of the activists interviewed live. Firearms in particular, are revered, giving power and protection to carriers, who are mostly men. Until structural inequalities that protect or expose communities to violence are addressed, vulnerable communities will continue to be at higher risk. Central to reducing a community's vulnerability is community member mobilisation for change.

Social/structural

This level of intervention was the most detailed as interviewees explored a range of social/structural factors that contribute to violence and challenge violence prevention initiatives.

Risks for violence include SA's history of violence under colonialism and apartheid which has continued under democracy, with systems and actions perpetuating 'intergenerational cycling' of violence; the lack of transformation under democracy and continuing poverty and inequality; and that while SA has very progressive policies and legislation to address historical inequalities and violence, these are not enforced due to corruption, incompetence and unaccountability.

Recommendations to address risks at this level include meaningful transformation and equality and accessibility and transparency in interventions. Interviewees spoke extensively of bridging the gap between policy and practice, and identified various interventions to support law enforcement and accountability including that laws, policies and action plans are based on evidence and not populism and emotion, and that interventions shown to work are properly funded; training is key to proper enforcement as is accountability; and until professions providing support, care and help to the public are professionalised and based on meritocracy and not mediocracy things will not change.

While a range of factors at various levels impact on an individual's ability to be an activist for change, individual activism is the foundation for change: "if we all of us decide to turn a blind eye, turn our face because we think of our safety, who's then going to bring the change we want to see? It is up to us to play an active role to turn things around for all of us."

Introduction

Recognising the lack of women and LGBTQI voices in international disarmament discussions, IM Sweden commissioned a series of country case studies to raise the voices of those affected by and acting to prevent armed violence.

In South Africa, Gun Free South Africa, an NGO that works to reduce gun violence to create a safer and more secure country, was appointed to undertake a literature review and series of interviews with survivors and activists to help fill gaps in our understanding of armed violence, including:

- Violence which infringes on access to economic, education, and political opportunities – i.e. access to public life
- The role of women as caretakers as a result of armed violence
- The general effect of armed violence on gendered power asymmetries within relationships
- Perspectives of women and LGBTQI community members on the relationship of small arms and light weapons (SALW) to intimate partner and sexual violence
- Perspectives of women on national and international level policy solutions to SALW related gender-based violence (GBV)

This report summarises the research undertaken by Gun Free SA for IM Sweden in October and November 2020; while it doesn't fill all of the gaps identified, it helps contribute to a deeper understanding of armed violence on women in South Africa and offers a range of solutions to reduce and prevent armed violence and build safer communities.

Literature review: Gender-based gun violence in South Africa

This section is drawn extensively from a 2019 case study analysing gender and small arms policymaking in South Africa (Kirsten, 2019).

Introduction

South Africa's national gun law, the Firearms Control Act (FCA) of 2000 (South Africa, 2000b) was passed at a time of enormous social and political change in the country. SA's new parliament, elected in the first non-racial democratic elections on 27 April 1994, adopted a wide range of progressive legislation. In addition to South Africa's Constitution and Bill of Rights, laws focused on addressing issues pertinent to the wellbeing of women, such as the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996 (South Africa, 1996) and the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) of 1998 (South Africa, 1998) were passed.

This gender focus is reflected in sections of the FCA: In the *Application for Competency Certificate* (ss. 9(2) (h) and (l)),[1] domestic violence incidents are taken into account as grounds for refusal, and the *Declaration of Persons as Unfit to Possess Firearm* (ss. 102 and 103), requires the courts, the police, or both to remove guns from owners who misuse their firearms, including in domestic violence. These sections also give the registrar and the courts the power to declare a person unfit to possess a gun if convicted of any offence involving violence or sexual abuse for which the accused is sentenced to imprisonment without the option of a fine, and any offence involving physical or sexual abuse occurring in a domestic relationship, as defined in the DVA (South Africa, 2000). The DVA recognises that domestic violence includes intimate partner violence, and makes provision for women to report the presence of a firearm in domestic violence incidents, or when applying for a domestic violence protection order (interim or permanent) at the magistrates' courts (South Africa, 1998, Section 4(1)).

Gender, violence, and guns

South Africa is among a small group of non-conflict-affected countries that suffer a great concentration of lethal violence against women and girls (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2015). This includes a female homicide rate of 9.7 per 100,000 population, with high levels of sexual and GBV (Small Arms Survey, n.d.). The *Crime Against Women in South Africa* survey shows that 68.5% of sexual offence victims are women (Stats SA, 2018). The cost of GBV is estimated to be ZAR 28.4–48.2 billion,[2] though this is deemed an underestimate as it does not include the cost of support services or the burden of trauma from experiencing or witnessing violence (Gould et al., 2017).

South Africa's high levels of overall violence are influenced by high socioeconomic inequality; social norms that support and legitimise the use of violence, in particular male-on-male violence; weak law enforcement; and wide exposure of children to violence, resulting in the 'intergenerational cycling' of violence (Jewkes et al., 2009).

[1] The full relevant text is as follows (South Africa, 2000b):
- Section 9(2) (h): 'has not been convicted, whether in or outside South Africa, of an offence involving—(ii) physical or sexual abuse which occurred within a domestic relationship as defined in section 1 of the DVA, 1998.'
- Section 9(2) (l): 'has not been convicted of an offence in terms of the DVA, 1998 and sentenced to a period of imprisonment without the option of a fine.'

[2] This was based on calculations for the 2012–13 financial year; the inflation calculator (online at https://inflationcalc.co.za/) estimates this to be ZAR 42.8-R72.7 billion as of 26 November 2020.

The gendered nature of gun use and gun violence is complex and multi-faceted in South Africa, as are issues of patriarchy and gender inequality. Patriarchy and gun violence affect men and women in different ways. In South Africa, 81% of legal gun owners are men, of whom 64% are over the age of 50, with the majority of firearms licensed for self-defence purposes (Wits School of Governance, 2015). Given the history of firearm ownership in South Africa, in which black South Africans were prohibited from legal firearm ownership, it can be assumed that legal gun ownership is concentrated among white males.[3] Men are also the primary victims of gun violence – accounting for 89% of total firearm homicides in the country; the majority of whom are young black men, aged 15–29 years, who live in urban areas and who are victimised by other young black men with illegal guns (Taylor, 2018). Although it is difficult to estimate the number of illegal guns in circulation, the primary diversion point for legal guns is loss and theft of licensed firearms from civilians: On average, 24 guns a day, police forces lose one gun a day (Taylor, 2018).

Although women make up just 11% of all gun-related murder victims (Matzopoulos et al., 2015), firearms play a significant role in VAW, most notably in the killing of intimate female partners (Abrahams, 2010). This is not unique to South Africa; research shows that in regions with high femicide rates, there are correspondingly high levels of tolerance for VAW and high rates of firearm-related lethal violence (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2015). In cases of intimate partner femicide-suicide, perpetrators are more likely to be white; to be employed in the police, army, or private security industry; and to own a legal gun (Mathews et al., 2008).

Both black and white South Africans share strongly patriarchal cultures – albeit with different inflections – which endorse their respective gun cultures and gender hierarchies, positioning women as subordinate. These norms convey the idea that men need to protect women from other men's violence, supporting male gun ownership while making women potentially legitimate targets (Langa et al., 2018). Some researchers argue that South Africa's high levels of violence are indicative of a crisis of masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa, with many young black men struggling to assert their masculinity 'by securing jobs, marrying, fathering children or establishing their own households' in an environment where women are perceived to be usurping roles previously held by men (Langa, 2014).

Although there is no disaggregated data on gun violence by sexual orientation and gender identity, hate violence claims the lives of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) at a disproportionate rate. Four out of ten LGBTQI South Africans claim to know someone who has been murdered, with black respondents being twice as likely (49%) as white respondents (26%) to know of someone who was murdered because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (OUT LGBT Well-being, 2016).

Despite the increased participation of women in policy and legislative processes (see Box 1 below for a summarised case study of women's role in crafting SA's new gun law), the shared patriarchal culture within the legislative arena has been sufficiently strong enough to remove language on the need to protect women in their homes. The explicit norm asserted has been that the private domain should not be legislated.[4]

[3] Although the Central Firearms Registry keeps disaggregated gun-ownership data, including by race, this information is not publicly available.
[4] Kirsten, Adèle. 2019. Interview with Pregs Govender (then a leading figure in the ANC women's caucus).

Box 1: Crafting the Firearms Control Act

South Africa's firearms law is part of the post-apartheid new democratic era when several hundred pieces of legislation were promulgated. This rich law-making period relied on substantial input from civil society organisations, and encouraged grassroots participation.

Crafting the FCA

Prior to the FCA being promulgated, the government signalled its intention to address the proliferation of firearms by setting up a number of committees, including a committee to review national firearm legislation and a Committee of Inquiry into the Central Firearms Register. As in other policy processes at the time, civil society organisations and women played a leading role in these two committees: Sheena Duncan[5] chaired the latter, while four of the six members of the policy committee represented civil society.[6] This disrupted the traditional male dominated discourse based on the assumption that men know more about firearm use and efforts to control their use. The inclusion of new voices resulted in a more collaborative approach, as well as an emphasis on the public good rather than individual rights.

Passing the FCA

The public was invited to make written submissions when the Firearms Control Bill was tabled in parliament in May 2000; the parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Police (PCoP) received more than 3,000 submissions (a sign of significant interest in the matter), and 93 oral submissions were made during the public hearings held in mid-2000. Although submissions were dominated by the firearms-owning community – the overwhelming majority of whom are white males – significant and diverse inputs were made by members of the Gun Control Alliance, including public health professionals, researchers, the faith community, and young people living in communities affected by high levels of gun violence.

Provisions to prevent GBV

Despite the inclusion of these voices in the crafting process, when the PCoP reviewed the Bill there was resistance across most political parties – including the African National Congress (ANC) – to the inclusion of language that would strengthen the protection of women in their homes. As a result, while the FCA includes some measures to protect women, many provisions were rejected.

Strict gun law saves lives, poor enforcement kills

The development of a small arms control policy and its implementation over nearly two decades in South Africa shows a discernible pattern of high levels of gun homicide during apartheid and the first years of democracy, followed by a steady decline over a ten-year period, in which the FCA was fully implemented. This seemingly robust trend began to reverse in 2011, closely linked to the waning of state accountability,

[5] President of the Black Sash, a well-known anti-apartheid human rights organisation, as well as chairperson of Gun Free SA.

[6] Two representatives were from the SAPS; the other four were representatives from the South African Communist Party; the South African Gun Owners Association, the South African Institute for International Relations, and the Director of Gun Free SA.

good governance, effective administration, and capacity of the state to enforce the new law, thereby increasing gun availability (Matzopoulos et al., 2018; Taylor, 2018).

Looking at gendered impacts specifically, the implementation of the FCA contributed to a significant decrease in firearm-related intimate femicide between 1999 and 2009 (Abrahams et al., 2013). A ten-year retrospective study on femicide in South Africa shows that the number of women killed by their intimate partner dropped from four women per day in 1999 to three women per day in 2009, largely due to the decrease in the number of women shot and killed. In 1999, 1,147 women died from gunshot injuries; in 2009, this dropped by more than half to 462, while deaths from stab and blunt injuries did not reduce noticeably over the same period (Abrahams et al., 2012). This significant reduction in firearm-related femicide is consistent with an overall decrease in firearm-related deaths over the same period: Gun deaths almost halved from 1998 (34 deaths per day) to 2009 (18 deaths per day) (Chetty, 2000; Matzopoulos et al., 2015). Homicides also dropped significantly over a similar period: From a high of 71 murders per day in 1994 to a low of 44 murders per day in 2011 (Lamb, 2008; SAPS, 2020a).

Yet, since 2011, murders have increased every year; 58 per day were recorded in 2019–20, a rate of 36 per 100,000 population (SAPS, 2020a). This upward trend is reflected in firearm-related homicides, with between 20 and 26 gun deaths per day (SAPS, 2020b).[7] The steady increase in firearm-related violence can be linked to a breakdown in the national firearms control regime. Poor enforcement and compliance has created a vacuum leading to the increased availability of weapons; for example, 33% of licensed firearm owners failed to renew their licence in 2015–16, though these firearms are still in their possession. The control regime has suffered from both fraud and corruption within the firearms management system, as well as poor stockpile management and under-resourcing (Taylor, 2018). In one of the most egregious examples of official failure to enforce the FCA that typifies the recent environment, an ex-police colonel responsible for managing weapon stockpiles earmarked for destruction stole 2,000+ firearms and sold them to gang leaders in the Western Cape – see Box 2 below.

Another representative case is that of Lucille[8], a young woman Gun Free SA assisted, including helping her make a statement to the police describing her husband's history of violent and abusive behaviour to show that he was not 'fit and proper' to be licensed to possess a firearm (South Africa, 2000b, s. 102). As a result, her husband was not issued a competency certificate, which is the first step to apply for a firearm licence. Some 18 months after her (now estranged) husband was denied a gun certificate due to her testimony, he appealed the South African Police Service's (SAPS) decision and was granted a licence.[9] This was most likely a result of poor record-keeping and part of a much bigger criminal justice system failure, including delays in securing domestic violence protection orders, with local courts seldom ordering the police to remove guns (Vetten and Schneider, 2006).

[7] According to the 2019-20 crime statistics, there were 7,351 firearm-related murders in 2019-20 (this is 34,5% of all 21,325 murders, 45% of the 16,272 murders for which the weapon is known, and an average of 20 people a day). The weapon is known in 76% of all 21,325 murders in 2019-20, assuming that 45% of all murders are firearm-related = 9,5936 gun-related deaths (an average of 26 people a day). Source: SAPS, 2020b.
[8] This is not her real name.
[9] Kirsten, Adèle. 2018. Email correspondence, October.

Box 2: The Prinsloo Case – gangsters armed with stolen guns[10]

From 2011 various incidents of fraud and corruption in the management of firearms in government's care began surfacing. The most publicised of these involves Christiaan Prinsloo.

In 2012, the police began recovering an inordinate number of guns on the Cape Flats that had been professionally 'cleaned' of identifying marks, proof that a sophisticated gun smuggling syndicate was at work. To track the supplier and the guns, two senior police officials, Peter Jacobs and Jeremy Vearey, registered Operation Impi in December 2013. By analysing the components of recovered guns, the team realised that one or more corrupt police officials were central to the syndicate. They narrowed their investigation down to Colonel Christiaan Prinsloo, commander of the Gauteng Firearm, Liquor and Second Hand Goods Control and respected 'firearms guru'. Under interrogation, Prinsloo confessed to his role in smuggling guns and entered into a plea bargain with the state, providing detailed information on the syndicate in return for a lesser sentence. In June 2016 Prinsloo was sentenced to 46 years imprisonment, though as some sentences run concurrently, this amounts to 18 years for selling guns that were confiscated by or surrendered to the police for destruction to gang leaders on the Cape Flats. Court papers show that (Jacobs, 2016):

- 888 of the guns stolen by Prinsloo were forensically linked to 1,066 murders in the Western Cape between February 2010 and 31 May 2016.
- 261 children between the ages of one and 18 years old were shot between February 2010 and December 2015 with guns stolen by Prinsloo, 89 of whom were killed.
- Of the 2,000+ guns that Prinsloo admitted to stealing as part of his plea bargain with the state, more than 1,100 are still missing.

Conclusion

The features of firearm violence and efforts to reduce it in South Africa are context-specific, but hold lessons for other national efforts to address violence, including GBV. In South Africa, policymakers and advocates took advantage of a 'defining moment' – the collapse of the apartheid era – to push the envelope in the most progressive direction possible, particularly with regard to civilian firearms possession. This effort had to overcome organised opposition, flowing from the strong historical and cultural ties with firearm ownership, especially for white men. The change in political power has meant that this group is no longer privileged; white men needed to engage with the policymaking process with all the other interest groups on a more levelled playing field.

Over almost 20 years, the discernible pattern in firearm-related homicides is strongly linked to the robust initial enforcement of the FCA, followed by a slacking off. The recent increase in gun violence is a result of a breakdown in the firearms-control management system, including poor enforcement by the state, poor compliance by firearms owners, fraud and corruption, poor stockpile management, and under-resourcing

[10] Information in Box 2 sourced from: de Wee, 2016; Dolley, 2015; Dolley, 2018; Mzants, 2016; and Pauw, 2017.

and capacity of the police (Taylor, 2018). For advocates of strong gun laws, the lesson is clear: Policymaking is only the first step in the process. Sustained political engagement is needed to fully implement and enforce gun control laws, because they will continue to face opposition from special interest groups. A final lesson is a more positive one: Women's meaningful participation and leadership is becoming felt in an area that, until recently, was limited to male influence and power. Today, South Africa is closer to a situation in which all those affected can help shape policies that affect their own safety and security.

Methodology

IM Sweden's brief to Gun Free SA was to interview:

- Two women or LGBTQI gun violence survivors to document their stories of survival
- Four women or LGBTQI activists working on gun violence prevention to explore why they are engaged, what challenges they face, and what their recommendations are.

Finding interviewees

In addition to asking for suggested interviewees in the communities in which we work, Gun Free SA approached the following women's and LGBTQI activists and rights organisations to help identify activists and survivors to be interviewed for this project:

1. Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org.za
2. Hate Crimes Working Group: www.hcwg.org.za
3. Lawyers for Human Rights: www.lhr.org.za
4. Melanie Judge @MelanieJudge
5. Sex Workers Education Advocacy Taskforce: www.sweat.org.za
6. The Other Foundation: www.theotherfoundation.org
7. Triangle Project: https://triangle.org.za
8. WeSeeYou: @WeSeeYou_2020
9. Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute: www.wrhi.ac.za
10. Women's Legal Centre: www.wlce.co.za

No interviewees from the LGBTQI community was identified using this approach. One possible reason, which has not been confirmed by any research in South Africa, is that a cursory analysis of hate-crimes research and associated media reporting on hate crimes against this community seems to indicate that guns are not often used; when guns are present they seem to be used to threaten the victim/survivor into submission, after which more immediate and directly physical acts of violence e.g. beating, raping, stabbing or stoning are reported. If research shows this to be true, we can begin unpacking what this tells us about the nature of violence and how it is enacted, in particular against perceived marginal groups or individuals.

Four women activists and two survivors were identified through Gun Free SA's contacts in communities. Only one activist self-identified as a gun violence prevention activist, with the other three identifying themselves as violence prevention, community safety and gender rights activists, with one contact saying, "you (Gun Free SA) are the only ones I know that work specifically on gun violence" (Sophie, 2020). As such this report focuses more broadly on violence, rather than armed violence.

Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were developed, the first for survivors of gun violence and the second for activists; questions for the second questionnaire were sourced from the Small arms Survey Gender-responsive Small Arms Control: A Practical Guide (LeBrun, 2019).

Questionnaire 1: Survivors - open ended narrative

Introduction: – Describe what the research project and interview are about and give some info on Gun Free SA and who you are – Check in how much time interviewee has and if happy to have interview recorded – Confirm if interviewee is happy to be identified in report and have photos taken – Emphasise that interviewee can stop at any time if they feel distressed
Testimonial: – Ask questions about what happened before, during and after the incident: Who, how, what, why, when – Ask questions about how interviewee coped/is coping and what would help them cope better
Close: – Ask if interviewee has anything more to add – Confirm that interviewee is still happy to be identified in report, that we may give them a call to check in details if have any further questions, and that Gun Free SA will send final report to them – Thank interviewee for their time

Questionnaire 2: Activists

1. Personal

Introduction:

- Describe what the research project and interview is about and give some info on Gun Free SA and who you are
- Check in how much time interviewee has (need about 90 minutes) and if happy to have interview recorded
- Confirm if interviewee is happy to be identified in report and have photos taken

Self-description:

1. Would you describe yourself as an activist? What does this mean/look like (ask questions to probe identity and activism around female, LGBTQI rights and gun violence/control)
2. Why did you become an activist?

2. Gender, race power analysis

1. What are the key responsibilities and activities (formal and informal) of different members of society?
2. Why are these people tasked with these responsibilities?
3. How do the different members of society accomplish their responsibilities? What resources are available to them?
4. Who owns/controls key resources?
5. Who makes key decisions? Which decisions do they make?
6. What are the rules, laws, norms, or customs that shape relationships between people of different gender identities?

3. Armed violence analysis

1. How do gender norms (including norms of masculinity and femininity) influence how people experience and participate in crime or violence?
2. Who uses violence? Against whom is violence used?
3. Who owns guns (legal or illegal) and why? (demand factors)
4. Is the impact of crime and violence different for different people? In what way?
5. Who controls or who has access to resources or opportunities related to firearms?(Who benefits more and who benefits less? Include law making, enforcement and working in security e.g. police, army, private security industry)
6. How does gender intersect with other identities (age, social class, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion, urban/rural setting, etc.) on people's experience of and attitudes towards safety and security?
7. Are there gender norms (or other identities) that could support peace and improved individual or community safety?

4. Way forward

Challenges and recommendations:

1. Summarise some of the challenges interviewee has identified in addressing GB gun violence, and ask if any others
2. Summarise some of the recommendations interviewee has identified in addressing GB gun violence, and ask if any other ideas, suggestions

Close:

- Ask if interviewee has anything more to add
- Confirm that interviewee is still happy to be identified in report, the details of the photographer (if relevant), that we may give them a call to check in details if have any further questions, and that Gun Free SA will send final report to them
- Thank interviewee for their time

Survivors and activists

Two interviews were conducted with gun violence survivors using questionnaire 1 and four interviews were conducted with activists using questionnaire 2 as a guide. The survivors and activists that shaped this report are named below:

	Name	Self description	Location
Survivors	Ntomfunthi	Mother and grandmother whose son was shot and injured in an armed robbery in October 2019	Waterval Boven, Mpumalanga
	Keletso	Survivor of an abusive step-father who held her hostage at gun point and who subsequently killed four people before being shot dead by the police	Alexandra, Gauteng
Activists	Michelle	Mother of three boys and activist working to create a safer community	Atlantis, Western Cape
	Sophie*	Female, queer human rights attorney and activist	Cape Town, Western Cape
	Roegchanda	A victim of and activist against gun violence	Manenberg, Western Cape
	Abigail	Youth activist working with young people to build a safer community	Alexandra, Gauteng

* Requested anonymity as "I don't want to stir shit with our government partners", so this is not her real name.

Findings

Stories of survival

Two gun violence survivors, Ntomfunthi and Keletso, were interviewed, here are their stories:

Ntomfunthi

Ntomfunthi is a mother and grandmother, she lives on a farm outside Waterval Boven in rural Mpumalanga where she works as a housekeeper. Her son, who is her only child, was shot and injured in an armed robbery in October 2019. She describes what happened:

My son, who lives in Belfast (about 35 km west of Waterval Boven), was at a college in Witbank (about 100 km west of Waterval Boven) doing a class for work. On a Friday in October 2019 he was hitchhiking to Waterval Boven to come and visit me when two armed men with balaclavas attacked him at a hiking spot. They stole everything he had and then shot him twice in the leg and left him lying on the side of the road. There are a lot of police patrolling the area, and the police found him lying there, they called the ambulance but it took a really long time to arrive, so another person with a car took him to hospital.

My son was shot at 6 O'clock on Friday evening and I got a phone call from the hospital on Saturday morning as I was on my way to work. When they told me my child was in hospital, that he had been shot, I thought I was going to collapse, I was so scared. My employer took me to the hospital, we picked up my son's girlfriend in Belfast on the way. I felt traumatised when I saw him lying in the hospital bed, he was bleeding from the leg and his arm and hand were injured and he couldn't move. I tried to be strong for him and he tried to be strong for me and his girlfriend and son, but I kept thinking "he may not make it."

My son was operated on and stayed in hospital for two months, where I visited him three times. When he was discharged from hospital he came and stayed with me until the end of January this year. While he stayed with me I cleaned and cooked for him – I made him breakfast before I went to work, then came home to give him lunch because he couldn't carry anything, I brought water for him to wash and helped clean his wound. He was in a lot of pain and couldn't sleep, so I also bought medicine and bandages. It is over a year since my son was shot, he still has a bullet in his knee and he limps, but he doesn't need to use crutches anymore and he has started doing piece (part-time, informal) work again.

The police and the hospital staff treated my son well. The police have a called him a few times, to see how he is and to keep his hope up. They also called twice to ask him to identify people they have arrested, but he can't recognise the men who shot him because they had their faces covered. The man who took my son to hospital in his car has also kept in touch with my son to see how he is doing.

I see my son; he is better now. He did struggle with depression, but he says, “I don’t want to go back, I want to go forward.”

I managed because of the support from my family and friends. When my son was in hospital I took my grandson (who is 4 years old) to stay with me because his mother was really struggling, she kept asking “what will I tell my son if his father dies?” I’m older, and more able to help my grandson, so he came and stayed with me in this time.

We prayed a lot to God for strength to cope. We have given all to God, and we have forgiven the men who shot my son. If we kept the anger in our heart we wouldn’t be able to heal and move on. My son has said, “what happened, happened, it’s in the past, but I’m alive, and I can walk without crutches.” He gives thanks to God for his life.

We haven’t told my grandson what happened to his father; we told him his father was at school and that he fell down playing ball. My grandson is too young to know what happened, and I’m afraid to tell him his father was shot, that this will stay in his mind as he grows up and that he may think that shooting someone is okay, that crime is okay; or he may seek revenge. We will tell him when he is older and can understand.

Keletso

Keletso, a young woman who grew up in Alexandra township, survived living with an abusive step-father and being held hostage at gun point. Her step-father, a police officer, went on to shoot and kill four people before he was shot and killed by the police. This is her story (supplemented by media reports of the shooting incident, highlighted in italicised text):

I lost my biological father at a young age. In 2011, when I was 11 years old, my mother met Ronnie Masie, a constable at the local police station. Two years into the relationship, Ronnie moved in with us. We lived a happy life, and I even began to see Ronnie as a father. But things started to change in early 2015, that’s when a woman called Sowela Nkuna, who was the mother of Ronnie’s child, threatened to press charges against him for domestic violence.

On 15 March 2015, the first serious incident occurred. On this particular Sunday, my mother suddenly left the house in a rush, with no explanation. I was ironing clothes in the dining room with my cousin when Ronnie started yelling, shouting, going on and on, and we had no idea what was happening. He then locked my cousin and I in the house, holding us hostage at gun point and telling us “you’re going to die today.” My mother then returned with the police, “an entire squad of policemen.” Ronnie went outside, and the policemen spoke to him, and he was yelling “I’m going to kill them.” Ronnie then called to me to fetch his

bullet proof vest. I fetched the vest and gave it to him, “I had to do it, he had a gun pointed at me and I knew that if he did shoot at me, he would not miss.” As I gave him the bulletproof vest, I saw my mom standing on the street, “I started screaming ‘Mama, mama, help us,’” but Ronnie pushed me back inside. Meanwhile the police just stood outside, not doing anything, just listening to him. “I knew I had to make a plan if I wanted to get out of this situation.” While Ronnie was outside with the police, my cousin and I managed to sneak out the kitchen door because he had not taken the keys. We tried to jump over the wall into our neighbour’s backyard. Suddenly Ronnie appeared and pointed the gun at us, he told me to get off the wall and go back in the house. Ronnie then locked me and my cousin in the house, taking away all the keys. Outside, Ronnie’s friend from the police station spoke to him, trying to convince him to let us go, and telling him that if anything happened to us, he would be arrested and he knew what life inside prison was like. Finally at 6pm that evening, Ronnie let me and my cousin free, “When the policeman came to get us out the house, I ran to my mother and was so grateful to be alive, I cried so hard.”

Ronnie was charged with domestic violence that night, and his service firearm removed. However, he wasn’t arrested, and no disciplinary inquiry was opened, nor was there an inquiry into whether he was fit to possess a firearm (Kuang, 2015).

When he came back to our house that night Ronnie apologised to my mother, she forgave him, and everything seemingly went back to normal, though I was still very angry about what Ronnie had put me through.

Later that month, Ronnie and my mom had an argument and Ronnie beat her “to a pulp.” At this point I was not speaking to Ronnie, but my mother still stayed with him. Ronnie later apologised to me and my cousin for everything he had put us through.

By June, the entire family had put “everything behind us and things were finally back to normal.”

But this seeming normalcy was shattered on Wednesday, 3 June when Ronnie shot and killed Sowela Nkuna, her uncle Mathews Mapaya, a neighbour, Stephina Semenya, and his colleague Major Thomas Moetlo. The shooting happened at the Alexandra police station where Sowela had gone to press charges of domestic violence against Ronnie after the couple had allegedly had an altercation earlier that day (Kuang, 2015). After killing Sowela, Mathews, Stephina and Thomas, Ronnie went back to Keletso’s house.

I had just fallen asleep and my mom was in the TV room. Ronnie entered the house in a rush, and kept chanting “I did something wrong”, but refused to explain what had happened. By this time I was awake and could hear he was gathering money together, then he told my mother, “tell the kids I love them, lock the door, I will call when I get to where I am going.” We locked ourselves in the house and as Ronnie tried to leave, he was confronted by the police. There was a shootout, and Ronnie was killed. We stayed in the house because we had no idea what was going on. We waited in fear until the police knocked on the door and told us what had happened. We went outside where my mother saw Ronnie lying near the gate, she rushed to him and saw that he was no longer alive.

We were then taken to the Alexandra police station, where we were told what Ronnie had done. We were shocked, especially when the police said they had shot Ronnie because he was a danger to us because when Ronnie came home after the shooting he wasn’t violent but rather showed “love and regret.”

After being told what happened, my mom, my cousin and I went into a room with the family members of the other victims, “Everyone was crying except for my mother, my cousin and I, partly because we were representing the person who took away from all these families, and if we cried, it would look as though we were sad to have lost a murderer. I also did not cry because I felt numb, I don’t think I was sad that he was gone. We could finally be happy and have peace.”

Me and my family had to continue playing the part of Ronnie’s family. My mother went to the mortuary, identified his body and washed it in preparation for the funeral; we also played a big role in planning the funeral. “My mom went through a lot, imagine having to do all this for a man that beat you black and blue, a man that pointed a gun at your child numerous times, a murderer.”

My mom and I are in a much happier place now and have managed to get through the entire ordeal by talking to each other. We were offered therapy but we didn’t think it was helping so we stopped. Sharing and talking about our journey through the violence and abuse has been our way of healing, “We still live with trauma, I get frightened by sounds because I remember when he beat her up and gunshots trigger me too. We are clear that we will never welcome a man into this house ever again.”

The police investigation into the shooting found that Ronnie had lied to get his service pistol back, telling his colleagues he was transporting prisoners, and that the warrant officer at the station at the time did not follow procedure in giving Ronnie a firearm (Kuang, 2015). In addition the investigation revealed that Ronnie had a history of violence and anger management issues: In 2013 he was admitted to Wedge Gardens Treatment Centre, a substance abuse rehabilitation centre, for 21 days to deal with anger management issues, while after the shooting SAPS tweeted that Masie “lacked discipline & acted aggressively towards his superiors” (Kuang, 2015).

Stories of activism

> *"Many would just talk about doing things in the community but would never do it, and I wanted to be that person that actually acted out on my promises, not for myself but for my three boys and the generations to come" – Michelle*

The four activists interviewed for this report had different journeys to their activism which revealed three common threads: First, is becoming aware of an injustice or injury to an individual, second is recognition that this injustice or injury isn't isolated, but is systemic, and finally there's a shouldering of responsibility to act to change the system so that the injustice or injury witnessed does not damage another individual.

Here is a summary of each interviewee's personal story of activism:

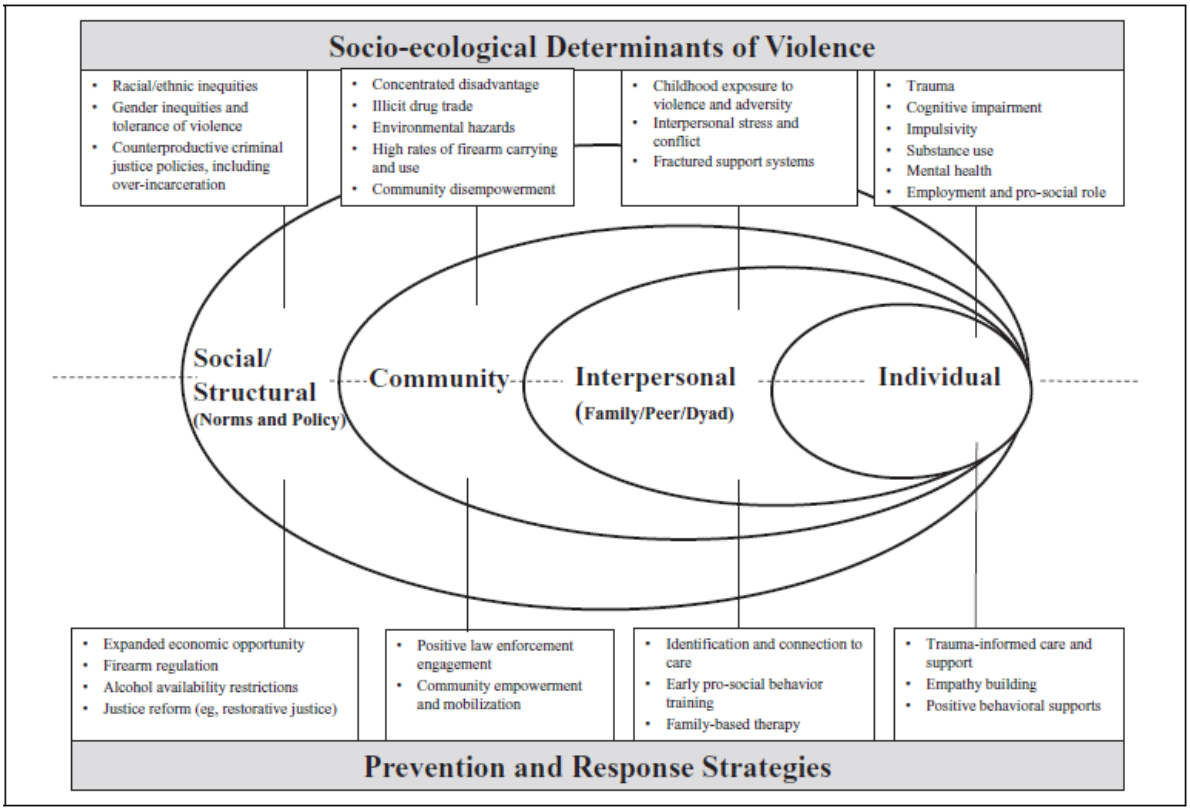
Name	Journey to activism
Michelle	Michelle became an activist about 10 years ago, at the time her son was becoming a teenager and she realised that there were nothing but negative things in Atlantis to attract young people and keep them busy. When she was growing up, Atlantis had tennis courts, arcades, and other safe spaces to hang out with your friends, but by the time her son became a teenager, gangsterism had risen and it was a "trend" to "be in those circles." This became a big concern for her, and she was inspired to act to protect her three sons and other young people growing up in Atlantis.
Sophie	Sophie became a gender rights activist because of her experiences as a child raised by two women under apartheid: she is from a conservative, religious family and described the anxiety when her mother left her father for another woman, with the family living in fear that Sophie and her brother would be taken away from their mother. She notes that the need for secrecy and not telling anyone "changed and shifted over time", so that now a woman being with another woman is seen as normal in her community, though she recognises that this isn't the case for other races, religions and socio-economic groups.
Roegchanda	Roegchanda's road to becoming a vocal gun violence prevention activist started in 2011 when, whilst doing a housing survey, she saw a 6 year old boy who was playing in front of his home get shot in the back in gang crossfire. She describes watching how his body slumped over, how his aunt came running down the stairs screaming, and that this young boy is now in a wheelchair, "that gripped me… I was a mother. My God, imagine my child…my children are growing up in Manenberg, their freedom to play is gone…from that day on, I never looked back." Roegchanda's commitment to activism and her courage came to the fore some years later: As the sole witness testifying against a gang leader accused of murdering a member of a rival gang, she survived three hits on her life, including gunmen opening fire on her house.
Abigail	Abigail, the youngest interviewee, became an activist through her work as a young reporter (for the Children's Radio Foundation) where she worked with a

team of youth reporters to engage youth on a range of issues, including violence prevention. She embraces her youth in her activism to build a safer community, "I believe that we as young people play a role…because we are the future of tomorrow, so why not start now and advocate now?"

Risks and recommendations

A range of risks and recommendations to reduce violence, including armed violence, and build safer communities were identified by interviewees. The World Health Organization's socio-ecological model of violence prevention has been used to categorise these (Violence Prevention Alliance, n.d.). In sum, this distinguishes between risk and protective factors for violence: Risk factors are those characteristics or conditions that increase the likelihood of violence occurring while protective factors are shields that reduce or eliminate these risks. Risk and protective factors are found at four levels: Individual, interpersonal, community and society, as illustrated in Figure 1 below (Decker et al., 2018).

Figure 1: Risk and protective factors for violence



Evidence shows that reducing risk factors and/or strengthening protective factors at these four levels leads to the prevention of violence and crime (Decker et al., 2018). However, this can be challenging, as many of these interventions, which include early-childhood development, employment opportunities, social support programmes and justice reform, are often long-term and require substantial resources and investment to yield positive results. Moreover, when levels of violence are as high as in South Africa, it can be extremely difficult to roll these interventions out as people's lives are in immediate danger.

Moreover, in trying to categorise risk and protective factors into these for levels, it became clear that they are interconnected and blend into one another. To illustrate, Michelle identified the allure of gangs as a major risk for violence in Atlantis, noting that one of the reasons they are attractive is because there aren't positive role models for youngsters in the community, which is linked to the fact that so many parents are absent as they seek work to provide for their families so grandparents are bringing up their grandchildren without understanding the "battles" facing young people. This observation touches on a range of risks at an individual, family and community level, which themselves cannot be separated from structural inequalities. With this explanatory caution, some of the risks and recommendations identified by interviewees are described below, starting from the individual and moving to the structural level.

Individual

Risks

Identity

> *"Under democracy heterosexual men have considerable power, just as they had under apartheid" – Sophie*

At an individual level, each person's social identity – their 'being' in the world – affects their vulnerability or resilience to violence because of its link to power. This section unpacks some of the insights on the relationship between social identity, power and violence risk/prevention as described by the interviewees.

While power dynamics have changed under democracy, there was overall recognition that diversity is generally not embraced in South Africa, and that conservative heterosexual men remain dominant. The irony, notes Sophie, is that staunchly conservative heterosexual men of different races still do not trust each other or see each other as allies.

Various social identities – age, job, income, hometown, religion, and particularly race and gender – impact on perceived and actual power. Abigail describes the impact of age and position: In her view people "in high positions", like ward councillors, "don't allow people like me (young people) access to information, or when we come with proposals for campaigns…it's a run around before we are able to get anything across."

While being young impacts on power and influence, Abigail who lives in a vibrant, urban township near Johannesburg also spoke about how accepting the community is of gender diversity, "Looking at Alexandra, I've never known it to be a space that discriminates. People have always been able to come out... I think it's because in the home, we have accepted that there are gay, lesbian and trans people, and so if I can welcome you in my home, it's easy to befriend you in the street." She is aware though that "In rural areas it's a different story", with "tradition and culture" strictly observed.

In addition to power, social identity also impacts on fear of and experiences of crime and violence. As a white middle class woman Sophie is very aware that she's much more cautious about what she feels safe to do than if she were a white, middle class man, but that her lived reality is very different from a woman of another race or socio-economic status. Abigail expands on this, noting that even though rich and poor

people are affected by crime, “the poor suffer a lot (as they) don’t have a backup plan”, while “the rich can still rise from the impact because of financial security.”

Abigail touches on some of the complexities between gender norms and violence: “We are taught that men are stronger than women”, so we see men as responsible for keeping us safe from other men. But this “giving men power over women” disempowers women as it both “undermines our ability to care for ourselves” and leads to women ‘tolerating’ “rapes, beatings and threats from our partners – the very people who should be protecting us.” This observation resonates with Keletso’s story where her mother stayed with Ronnie, a man that in Keletso’s words to describe her mother’s experience, “beat you black and blue, a man that pointed a gun at your child numerous times, a murderer.”

Abigail goes on to note that the gender norm in SA is that “a man is never wrong; a man is a provider.” But in a country with extremely high levels of unemployment,[11] being unemployed “takes away from ‘being a man’, and so he goes towards crime.” Even though robbery is one of the most feared crimes in South Africa (Bowman et al., 2018), Abigail observes that a criminal’s family will accept his criminality because it enables him “to fit into that role at home…they (the family) will not report or even ask questions because they are enjoying the benefits and being provided for.”

It is not only that families, including mothers and wives, are accomplices to crime through their silence; Roegchanda believes that some women are perpetrators, because “if you can’t beat them, join them.” Referring to gangsterism she believes that women played “a slave role” in the past e.g. a woman would take drugs with her when she visited male family in prison to “work” drugs into prison, but this “slave” or “secondary” role has “transformed”; women are now drug and gun runners, and while men gang leaders are in prison, women have gained experience running the business of gangs and are increasingly taking on leadership positions. A case in point is that of Simone “Moni” Jasmin a revered[12] and feared drug lord ‘godmother’ who was assassinated at the end of October (Rondganger, 2020). According to Roegchanda, the increasingly equal role played by women in crime has contributed to the sophistication, “the level” of organised crime in South Africa.

Within accepted, albeit slowly changing, gender norms, women bear the brunt of inequality, poverty, discrimination and unemployment, which limits their choices. Sophie, who worked at a women’s legal advice centre where she dealt with domestic violence cases, describes how the socio-economic dependence of women traps them into staying with an abusive partner, women say, ‘I can’t leave him, I don’t have a job, how will I look after my children, how will I look after my parents?’ This insight may partly explain why Keletso’s mother chose to stay with Ronnie despite the violence and abuse.

[11] Figures for Quarter 3 of 2020 show that unemployment has risen to between 30.8% (narrow definition) and 43.1% (expanded definition, which includes discouraged work seekers) (Stats SA, 2020).
[12] Jasmin was revered for the birthday parties she threw for children and the food hampers she handed out to the community (Nair, 202).

Trauma

"People have multiple layers of unhealed trauma" – Roegchanda

Roegchanda, activist from Manenburg

A history and culture of violence has meant that South Africa as a nation is deeply traumatised, with high levels of structural and interpersonal violence that cycle through generations (see page 30 below). The result is deep trauma at an individual level. Roegchanda recounts working with about 30 police officers who chose to go to a trauma centre rather than to inhouse counselling for fear of the "labelling" given to them. She notes that everything these officers see at work gets taken home to their families, and that when a couple breaks up it is not because they don't care for each other, it's because "they do not know how to process the pain and the trauma they are seeing."

Recommendations

Discussing social identity as a factor for resilience or vulnerability to violence pre-empts the final part of the findings presented in this report – the discussion on social/structural risks and recommendation (see page 30) – because until everyone is treated equally irrespective of their identity, violence and trauma will continue to cycle through generations. That said, various interventions can help protect an individual from violence, including programmes that teach social, emotional and behavioural skills to build positive relationships and after school programmes that provide tutoring to increase academic performance and which keep children and youth busy and off the streets.

Both Roegchanda and Sophie emphasised that having accessible and effective trauma services is integral to violence prevention, yet there is massive underfunding of care work in South Africa. In fact, the recently published Victim Support Services Bill (Minister of Social Development, 2020) has been roundly criticised by organisations that provide support services for victims of crime and violence for a range of reasons, one of which is that it will significantly increase costs, for which many already rely on donor funding.

Interpersonal

Risks

"A victim (of violence) is not just one person; a victim is the face of a ripple effect" – Sophie

At an interpersonal level, risks for violence include exposure or involvement in fights or tension among family members, marital instability, poor communication, a lack of supervision or monitoring of children and a lack of emotional support. As a result of a range of structural factors, many of these interpersonal risks are present in communities across SA.

For instance, Michelle says that one of the challenges she faces in Atlantis is parents not being involved in their children's lives. Although this lack of involvement is often linked to poverty, she argues that youth are put at higher risk when parents do not "show up for their kids." Abigail agrees that parents and care givers

are valuable in the lives of young people, “they play a very important role in our life in guiding us, giving moral support and advice.”

Recommendations

The important role of interpersonal relationships including in helping families heal from trauma is apparent in Ntomfunthi’s story of survival, as she identifies her family and friends as helping her cope with her son’s shooting; and recounts how support from the police and the passer-by who transported her son to hospital have helped him recover.

There are a range of interventions that would help improve interpersonal relationships, including family support to promote positive child development, youth mentoring programmes and relationship workshops where couples work on respectful communication strategies.

For example, the INSPIRE programme developed by the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children has identified seven strategies to protect children from violence (End Violence Against Children, n.d.), one of these is parent and caregiver support; this kind of intervention aligns with Michelle’s view that parents have a particular role to play in helping protect their children, by “starting to show up for their kids.” She notes that in many cases, the parents don’t know what their kids are doing, because they have to work, etc. but urges that if you know that your neighbour’s son is hiding guns when the parents are at work, it is your job as the witness to tell your neighbour or report it to the police.”

Community

Risks

According to the World Health Organization’s violence risk model, communities are particularly vulnerable when disadvantages are concentrated, there are high levels of illegal drug trade, high rates of gun carrying and use and community disempowerment; all or a combination of these characterise the communities of Alexandra, Atlantis and Manenberg, where three of the activists interviewed live.

Gangs and drugs

> “Young people in marginalized communities are often at risk of joining a gang or participating in criminal activities” – Roegchanda

Gangsterism is synonymous with the drugs trade, which means understanding the use, misuse and trade of illegal drugs is central to any intervention involving gangs (Pinnock, 2019). Both Michelle and Roegchanda became activists to protect their children from gangsterism: Michelle was motivated to protect her sons from joining a gang. She identified the lack of positive role models in Atlantis, as a major challenge to “creating spaces and platforms for young people to be and do better than just being in a gang”, for instance, she says, 80% of our young people are being raised by grandparents, and they can’t always relate to the battles that young people are faced with in this day and age. Roegchanda’s activism was initially aimed at protecting her children from gang-related violence, including shooting, after she witnessed a young child get shot.

Firearms

> "Gangsters get guns for the same reason civilians do, to protect their tribe and turf" – Michelle

Michelle, activist from Atlantis

Even though South Africa's long history of violence continues to challenge violence prevention initiatives, interviewees observed that gun violence within their communities is becoming more prevalent, says Michelle, "Back in the day gun violence only used to happen once or twice a year, and everyone was shocked, but now it happens three times a week, and we are acting like everything is normal." As noted in the literature review on page 9, her observation is confirmed by crime statistics and research, which shows that gun violence in South Africa has been steadily rising since 2011.

According to Roegchanda, the founders of the Hard Livings gang[13] introduced guns to Manenberg; "guns were their power"; and that they had guns allowed the Hard Livings gang to consolidate its power as members from other gangs joined the Hard Livings because "this gang has guns, and money and power"…it became "an empire."

In Roegchanda's analysis illegal guns, are acquired for power and gain. Abigail confirms this, distinguishing between police officers and anyone with a licensed gun having it for self-defence while gangsters have illegal guns "for robbery and other illegal dealing."

The reality is much more complex, as Michelle recognises: South Africa's high levels of violent crime leads to great "fear" and "feeling unsafe" in communities across the country; this drives people to get guns for self-defence, either through legal channels or illegally. While Michelle observes that gangsters get guns to have "power over the civilians", she also notes that "Gangsters get guns for the same reason civilians do, to protect their tribe and turf."

The close relationship between legal and illegal guns was recognised, e.g. Michelle spoke about guns being stolen from legal gun owners and the police, and noted police corruption in diverting guns. Roegchanda also spoke about how corruption arms gangsters, "most of our police officers in charge of firearm licences have relations with the gangs, they are on the payroll of the gangs."

[13] Identical twins Rashied and Rashaad Staggie founded and led the Hard Livings gang, which has the third-biggest territory of any gang in Cape Town, after the Americans and the 28s (GIATOC, 2020). Other than dealing in drugs and firearms, the Hard Livings' operations also include protection rackets, extortion, prostitution, and the taxi business, though drugs remain the most important business (GIATOC, 2020). Rashaad Staggie was murdered in August 1996 (Zavis, 1996), and Rashied was murdered 23 years later in December 2019 (Voice Reporter, 2019).

Whether legal or illegal, says Roegchanda “mostly men have the guns”, even though more women are carrying, as they take on “pivotal roles in the gang world”, men are the predominant users of and traders in guns.

Recommendations

Community mobilisation

Interventions such as positive law enforcement engagement and community empowerment and mobilisation are identified as important violence prevention and response strategies at this level. All four of the activists interviewed are actively involved in building safer communities and reducing violence, by acting to reduce the risk of gangs, drugs and guns particularly for young people. They recognise that a range of structural inequalities mean some communities are protected from violence while others are exposed[14], and note how this impacts on individuals. Roegchanda describes how growing up in violent neighbourhoods means “our children are taught to be soldiers from a young age”, and is adamant that it’s “up to us”, parents, grandparents and community members at large, to “change that, to change that life story.” The challenge though is that community members do not get involved. Says Michelle, “People in the community have the mindset of believing because it does not affect me I can’t or won’t do anything about it.” All the activists interviewed urged people to not turn a blind eye but to become active agents for change – an issue discussed more on page 36.

Social/structural

As was described in the section describing the link between social identity, power and risk or resilience (see page 25), pervasive inequality is a distinguishing feature of South Africa. Interviewees touched on a range of social/structural inequalities as they identified challenges to violence prevention and made recommendations. To note that this level of intervention was the most dense, with interviewees describing in detail how factors at this level contribute to South Africa’s high levels of violence.

Risks

History and culture of violence

South Africa’s history of violence under colonialism and apartheid have continued under democracy, with systems and actions perpetuating ‘intergenerational cycling’ of violence (Jewkes, et al., 2009). For instance, a longitudinal study of violence in the lives of South African children from birth to 20+ years in Soweto, Johannesburg found that over the past two decades, only 1% of the sample had not been exposed to or experienced violence in their home, school and/or community (Richter, 2018): Two-thirds of children of school going age were reported as having been exposed to community violence, and more than half of all children to violence in their home. Reports of sexual violence increased from 10% among primary school-aged children to 30% among adolescents and young adults. High levels of violence perpetration were reported across childhood. Age and gender differences in exposure to and experience and perpetration of violence were evident, and all categories of violence were more prevalent among poorer and more disadvantaged groups.

[14] For instance, the Social Justice Coalition has a Police Resources Campaign to compel the Minister of Police, the National Police Commissioner and the Western Cape provincial Commissioner to revise the system governing the allocation of the South African Police Service’s (SAPS) human resources to police stations across the country (SJC n.d).

Inequality

The lack of transformation under democracy and continuing poverty and inequality were identified as a key obstacle to violence prevention. Sophie talks about the "transformation project" being "delayed" (to express optimism that real transformation will happen), but that this delay has meant that "a lot of people have been left behind." In her view government does not "give enough of a shit", and that particularly under Zuma[15] the "state was hollowed out, ransacked", which has taken away from job creation, housing, health care and education. Twenty five years into democracy many people still have no dignity, their human rights are trampled on daily, life is cheap "so we can't be surprised when people disregard life."

Moreover, she notes that South Africa's history of apartheid has meant that "gender inequality is seen as second to racial inequality, when the reality is that they are hand in hand."

Michelle describes the knock-on effects of inequality when she talks about one of the obstacles to keeping children safe in Atlantis: She recognises that a key reason children are at risk is because parents are not involved in their kids lives, but links this absence to poverty, "in many households in Atlantis we have one parent working for two, three kids and that means long hours at work to put bread on the table."

Good laws, poor implementation and the value gap

Sophie recognises the importance of policies and legislation to address historical inequalities and violence, for instance while South Africa has a "progressive constitution", black economic empowerment policies and gender ratios for business and government, she notes that "transformation is not just about the numbers."

In her interview Sophie often probed the gap between legislation, the enforcement thereof and values; to illustrate, while policies to promote gender equality mean there is 50% representation of women in parliament, this hasn't made women any less vulnerable to harassment and bullying in the workplace, "the problem is our values have not shifted, we are a very conservative, very patriarchal and very religious society."

In another example of the disconnect between legislation, enforcement and values, Sophie describes how on the one hand South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 emphasises protecting youth from crime (both as victims and perpetrators), yet the focus of the country's criminal justice system is to criminalise and punish, so for example, children under 16 years of age are criminalised for having consensual sex with one another. Roegchanda agrees, she refers to the number of young people in prison, "who should never have been incarcerated." Why, she asks are children imprisoned for being in possession of a small amount of marijuana, which means the child will have a criminal record for the rest of his life, which "will limit him when he wants to go to college or when he wants to go and work."

Roegchanda notes that poor implementation of good laws is good for crime; criminals, which includes corrupt officials, benefit from "keeping the chaos in communities alive." She argues that stability and peace will not benefit the current system; while a cynical observation, it points to the immense challenge in addressing systemic failures that contribute to crime and violence.

[15] Jacob Zuma, the president of South Africa from 9 May 2009 to 14 February 2018, which have been described as "nine wasted years" (Modjadji and Stone, 2019).

Corruption, incompetence and unaccountability

Interviewees referred to both personal and professional experiences to illustrate the impact of corruption and incompetence. Michelle described how corruption and associated lack of trust impacted her family: When her son was in matric (his final year of school) she had to send him away because his life was threatened by a group of gang members, "My kids did not want me to go to the police, because they said that 'the police are with them, and you can't trust them'."

Roegchanda referred specifically to corruption in South Africa's firearms control management system, "most of our police officers in charge of firearm licences have relations with the gangs, they are on the payroll of the gangs…How in heaven's name did our crime intelligence miss that?" She blames "a lack of" oversight and monitoring for creating a vacuum in which crime has flourished.

In her interview Abigail conveys a sense of alienation from decision-making, and links this to corruption; she notes how people with "authority and power" make decisions which are then announced, "We hardly ever know who was part of the decision making process. Sometimes community members will be called to meetings, raise their concerns and nothing happens or changes. It's as though some things are done as a formality", with decisions about how funds will be spent or who will be appointed having been made before the consultation even happened. Roegchanda agrees, referring to the "top-down approach" of governing in South Africa, "where we tell you and you should listen."

Incompetence too impacts on trust. Says Sophie, "Being a cop is not just about earning money, you need knowledge of the law, you need compassion." Michelle and Roegchanda expand on this by noting the impact of unaccountability, whether deliberate or inadvertent; says Michelle, police officers act with impunity, "thinking they can do whatever they want to because they hold this title. Roegchanda agrees, civil servants forget that they are appointed to serve the people, not the other way around.

Corruption, incompetence and unaccountability pervert justice: If you are a criminal standing trial, says Roegchanda, and you do not have a judge who is easily bought, "you are in trouble." That justice can be bought and sold means a loss of trust in institutions and processes as "murderers and rapists walk free."

Corruption also kills as the actions of Chris Prinsloo show (see Box 2 on page 13), but so do incompetence and unaccountability, as Keletso's story tragically illustrates.

Abigail describes how unaccountability leads to feelings of being "ignored" or "silenced". She recounts how the only time those in power hear concerns is when there is a march or protest, "we have to go to extremes for women to be heard and protected. Why should we protest for our safety and to be heard? This is a serious issue; it should be taken seriously." Roegchanda agrees, the only activity our government wants from us is for us to pay our taxes, "we want your money" but "we don't want no chat-backs", which means protests and "pop ups of violence" as people seek answers to explain why policies and laws aren't being implemented.

Sophie also notes that language and policies perpetuates the belief that women are inferior, childlike and incapable of looking after themselves. For instance wording used in government communication (as recently as September 2020) to act to "protect *our* women" (emphasis added, Government Communication and Information System, 2020), and proposed changes to the so-called Sexual Offences Act (Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 2020b), which identifies "a female under the age of 25 years" along with children

and people with disabilities as "a person who is vulnerable"[16] and needing additional protection, takes away women's power and autonomy.

Recommendations

While legislation e.g. to prohibit violence and discrimination, expand economic opportunity, regulate firearms and restrict alcohol as well as criminal justice reform are important interventions to reduce the risk of violence; the problem in South Africa is not that the policy isn't there, it is that the policy is not implemented – be it South Africa's Constitution, laws such as the FCA or policies and procedures. The fact of this, and the resultant tragedy, is illustrated by Keletso's story: Five people were shot and killed because the SAPS, despite knowing that her step-father had a history of violence and despite having defused a hostage situation in which her step-father held Keletso and her cousin at gunpoint, failed to act to ensure he couldn't have access to a firearm.

As such, the recommendations below focus largely on effecting meaningful change by bridging the gap between paper and practice.

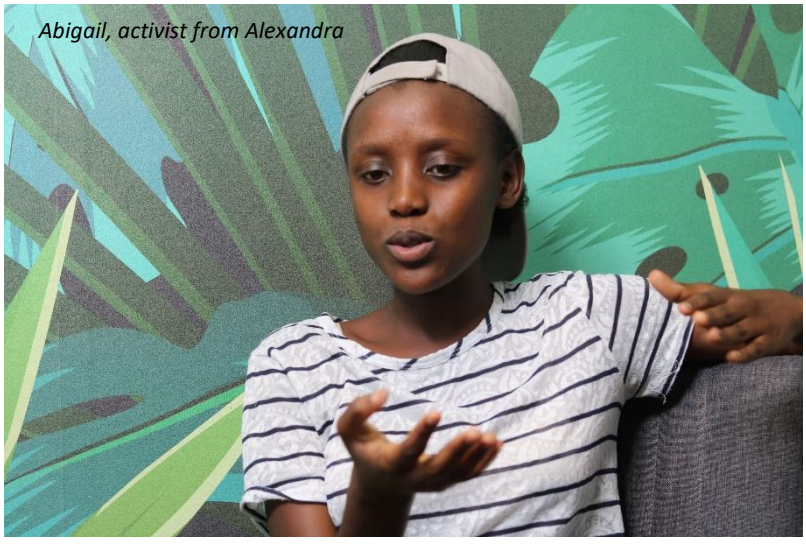
Transformation

> "Until a farm worker earns a decent salary, has a home of his own, a piece of land to work for himself, is able to educate his children like my children are educated, only then we all can claim we have democracy" – Roegchanda

Sophie and Roegchanda both spoke at length about the centrality of transformation and equality. They are both adamant that until the systematic problems that trace back to colonialism and apartheid are addressed and people's dignity is given back, "The soil for criminality will always be fertile…", only once there is equality for all can we begin to imagine a gun free world, or a police free world (Roegchanda, 2020).

Accessibility and transparency

> "Protesting and marching are not the way to eradicate gender-based violence" – Abigail



Abigail, activist from Alexandra

Feeling silenced, only being consulted for appearances and a lack of trust were threads running through interviewees reflections, which underscore a need for meaningful consultation and transparency in interventions to address crime and violence. Abigail

[16] The purpose is to "expand the list of persons who are to be protected to include other vulnerable persons, namely young women, persons with physical, mental or intellectual disabilities and persons over 60 years of age who, for example, receive community-based care and support services" (Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 2020, p. 14).

describes how real engagement and transparency, "so that we know what's going on", would facilitate partnerships "between authorities and the public to help one other to stand against all types of violence that our country is facing at the moment."

Enforcement and accountability

> "Our problem is not that we don't develop policies, our problem is implementing policies" – Sophie

According to Sophie, government's response to any crisis is to develop laws, policies and action plans, "it plugs holes with more paper." To illustrate, following a spate of brutal murders of women and public outrage, including a Women's March involving thousands of women protesting government's failure to deal with rising violence against women on 5 September 2019, government responded by amending three laws that deal with GBV. But, says Sophie, "these are window dressing", if a cop is prejudiced then he will not help a butch looking woman in a violent domestic relationship whom he sees as 'other' as 'less than a person' no matter what the law says.

Interviewees identified four interventions to support law enforcement and accountability:

Firstly, laws, policies and action plans that are developed must not be led by emotion and populism,[17] but by evidence and, crucially, interventions shown to work must be properly funded. Sophie gives a number of examples to illustrate this, including research showing that victim-centred sexual offences courts have higher conviction rates and that GBV Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs)[18] are effective. Why, she asks, isn't

Box 3: Parliament urges public to participate in GBV bills
(Parliament, 2020 unless otherwise stated)

In September 2020 Parliament, through the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services, processed "three crucial Bills that will change the landscape in terms of how government departments, law enforcement and the courts deal with cases of violence against women and the vulnerable."

The three Bills are:

The Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill, B17-2020 to, amongst other things, regulate the granting and cancellation of bail; the giving of evidence by closed circuit television or by a witness with physical, psychological or mental disability; and the right of a complainant in a domestic related offence to participate in parole proceedings (Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 2020a).

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act

[17] Following a spate of brutal murders of women and public outrage, including a Women's March, a range of petitions were launched (Etheridge, 2019), including one to" Bring Back The Death Sentence in SA For Crimes Against Women", which has 673,745 signatures as of 14 November 2020. See www.change.org/p/south-african-government-bring-back-the-death-sentence-in-sa-for-crimes-against-women

[18] TCCs are "one-stop facilities designed to provide sexual and gender-based violence survivors with access to medical, psychological and legal support services all in one place. The centres are a joint initiative of the health, justice and social development departments. Under the arrangement, the health department provides centres with medical services while staff from the department of justice and constitutional development help survivors register cases against their abusers, if victims choose, and go on to prepare them for court." (Msomi, 2019).

more funding spent to make all courts victim-centred and why are TCCs dependent on international donor funding, and closing down because of funding shortfalls? Similarly the Civilian Secretariat for Police Services is responsible for managing the implementation of the DVA but does not have the capacity to do this, says Sophie, "they are not given the tools." And even though individual trauma increases the risk of violence (see page 27 above), making support services for victims integral to violence prevention, there is massive underfunding of care work, which is most often provided by women – as Ntomfunthi's story confirms. Says Sophie, "If you want to know what our government's priorities are, don't listen to the things said during the 16 days of activism,[19] look at the budget and where the money is spent." She argues that "one of the best ways to support women escaping abuse" is to make them economically independent" e.g. through cash transfers, job creation and housing provision; instead South Africa's national airline was allocated a ZAR 10.5 billion bailout in the medium term budget policy statement presented to parliament in late October (Maeko, 2020).

Amendment Bill, B16-2020 to, amongst other things, extend the ambit of the offence of incest; introduce a new offence of sexual intimidation; further regulate the inclusion of particulars of persons in the National Register for Sex Offenders; make provision for certain particulars of persons who have been convicted of sexual offences to be made publicly available; extend the list of persons who are to be protected; and further regulate the reporting duty of persons who are aware that sexual offences have been committed against children" (Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 2020b).

The Domestic Violence Amendment Bill, B20-2020 to, amongst other things, further provide for the manner in which acts of domestic violence must be dealt with by certain functionaries, persons and Government departments; and further regulate obtaining of protection orders in response to acts of domestic violence (Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 2020c).

Secondly, training is key, for instance in Sophie's dealing with domestic violence cases she sees that protection orders almost never require that a gun must be removed. The reason for this is that court clerks do not ask about guns and do not tailor the order to the client. Another example referred to by Sophie is the Hate Crimes Bill[20], which has not been costed; according to the state no additional funding is needed because the police are already doing the work. But, says Sophie, the Bill is not being implemented as the police have received no training on what it means and how to implement it. Roegchanda also identified training as key so that those tasked with serving the public actually understand what this means. She describes how a lack of training and empathy results in secondary traumatisation e.g., when a domestic violence survivor is shouted at by a police station desk sergeant or a rape survivor wanting privacy is identified in front of everyone in the charge office. This "stigmatising, labelling, punishing…you get it from the people who have to protect you." Roegchanda's remarks on the power of empathy in helping victims of violence recover is apparent in Ntomfunthi's story, when she notes how the support her son received from

[19] The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children Campaign.
[20] The correct name is The Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill (Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, 2018).

the police from the time he was shot, to the present, with officers keeping in touch to see how he is, helped him recover and kept his hope up.

Thirdly, Sophie argues, "government doesn't understand that implementation involves accountability, and that heads must roll if the work is not done." She links the lack of accountability to the ANC's policy of cadre deployment; for instance, Chapter 9 institutions[21] are "filled with washed up politicians." There is she says, "massive reluctance" by government to get rid of incompetent people and replace them with motivated, skilled, capable people. And until professions providing support, care and help to the public are professionalised and based on meritocracy and not mediocracy things will not change.

Finally, the language used in policies, plans, programmes and procedures needs to change; says Sophie, words like acting to protect "our women" fail to recognise women's autonomy. Also, campaigns to "end" the scourge of GBV are completely unrealistic, and so unachievable, we should instead aim to prevent or reduce GBV.

Individual activism

> "Activism is about going in the mud" – Roegchanda

The findings of this report started with the risks and recommendations to build resilience and reduce risks at an individual level and ended with recommendations at the social/structural level.

It seems fitting to circle back to the individual and note that while a range of factors at various levels impact on an individual's ability to be an activist for change, all the activists interviewed are clear that individual activism is the foundation for change, despite the risks and delayed results. Explains Roegchanda, "if we all of us decide to turn a blind eye, turn our face because we think of our safety, who's then going to bring the change we want to see? It is up to us to play an active role to turn things around for all of us."

This report includes the voices of activists who are acting to make their communities safer, healthier, happier places – in big and small ways. And while the bigger ways often get publicised, seemingly smaller, more intimate decisions can have big impacts. For instance, Ntomfunthi's decision to hide her son's shooting from her grandson until he is older and can better understand what happened so as to protect him from the violence in his young world potentially contributes to his feeling safer and having more trust in people, thereby helping reduce the risk of intergenerational cycling of violence in her family.

[21] Seven organisations set up under SA's Constitution to protect democracy.

Conclusion

Through a literature review and interviews with two gun violence survivors and four activists working to build safer communities, this report helps fill some gaps in our understanding of violence and its prevention.

In particular it tracks some of the ways in which violence, including armed violence is gendered; it confirms that women are the caretakers in armed violence – caring for the men in their lives who are shot, even when they are killed (as Keletso's mother's experience shows); and how armed violence impacts on access to public life. In particular, it describes women's perspectives on factors that increase the risk of violence and recommendations to reduce and prevent violence at an individual, interpersonal, community and social/structural level. In doing this it shows how complex and interconnected the drivers of armed violence are, as are the solutions.

South Africa's experience also shows 'quick' interventions that can reduce violence. Under some levels of Covid-19 lockdown, the sale of alcohol was banned. At the same time, there was a significant decline in crime and violence (SAPS 2020c, SAPS 2020d).

But our experience under Covid-19 lockdown also shows that even though crime and violence declined in the time, firearm violence remained high: Research in the Western Cape, which looked at violent crime under six weeks of strict lockdown (29 March to 9 May 2020), shows that (like across SA) crime in the province declined (Western Cape Government Department of Community Safety, 2020). The researchers put forward a number of possible reasons for this, noting that the ban on alcohol sales, restriction of people's movement, and law enforcement and policing to ensure regulations were adhered to all helped reduce violent crime.

However, even though murder in the Western Cape declined in these six weeks, this was due to a significant drop in the number of murders with knives: Knife-related murders dropped from 64 in this six week period in 2019 to 9 murders in 2020, and the proportion of people stabbed dropped from 36% to 9%. In contrast, while gunshot murders did decline (from 93 murders to 76), the proportion of people shot increased from 52% in 2019 to 75% in 2020.

What this shows is that limiting alcohol, limiting people's movements and increasing policing and law enforcement do not reduce gun violence.

Gun violence can only happen when there is a gun; the fewer guns there are, the lower the risk of death or injury.

To reduce gun violence, we need to reduce the easy availability of guns. Between 2000 and 2010 gun-related murders halved in South Africa, which research has linked to a range of gun control interventions during this time (Abrahams, et al., 2012, Matzopoulos et al., 2015). However, in 2010/11, SA's murder, attempted murder and aggravated robbery rates began increasing. At the same time evidence of the FCA not being properly implemented began mounting (Matzopoulos et al., 2018; Taylor, 2018).

As the number of guns began increasing so did incidents of gun violence. Currently 23 people are shot and killed every day in South Africa. Currently 138 people survive a gunshot, often with severe disabilities[22], every day in South Africa.

With these statistics in mind, it seems fitting to conclude this report by recounting what happened at the end of Ntomfunthi's interview; as the interview was finishing she asked the interviewer, "how did hearing my story make you feel, is hearing it just part of your job, or could you feel, as a woman, what I went through?' While readers of this report will not be able to engage directly with Ntomfunthi and the other interviewees included in this report, we hope that including their voices helps the reader see beyond the numbers, and to feel the fear and trauma, but also the anger, energy and hope that interviewees expressed as they respond to and act to end violence, including armed violence, in South Africa.

[22] A comprehensive global study on gun violence and disability estimates that for every person shot and killed as many as six victims will survive, often with severe disabilities (Buchanan, 2013).

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