



TEAM SOUTH AFRICA

Agencies Represented: The Department of Social Development, The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, and UNICEF

Problem: 1 in 3 children in South Africa experiences sexual violence; in some regions, up to 77% of women report having experienced some form of violence

Policy: The Program of Action to Address Violence Against Women and Children, under revision

Objective: Revise the Program of Action with an increased focus on evidence and coordination; prioritize a few clear and concrete indicators and improve data collection

Funding: Government funding from various departments, with support from UNICEF and DFID

THE PROBLEM:

In South Africa, 1 in 3 children experiences sexual violence, between 33% and 45% witness domestic violence, and about 55% experience neglect. The mean age at which girls first experience sexual abuse is 14, and this abuse has negative impacts on their schooling, mental and physical health, and future risk of violence. In some regions of South Africa, up to 77% of women report having experienced some form of violence, and between 40 and 70% of female murder victims are killed by husbands or partners. These numbers likely underestimate the true scale of the problem, as domestic violence and violence against women and children go widely underreported. Such high levels of violence undermine investments in education, health, economic development, and job creation; studies show that physical and emotional violence cost 6% of South Africa's GDP. Despite several strategies to address it, including legislation, policies, programs, and services, violence remains high across the country, creating a heavy social and economic burden on the nation.

THE POLICY:

South Africa's Department of Social Development is currently reviewing the Program of Action on Violence Against Women and Children (POA VAWC), with technical support from UNICEF. The POA was developed as a five-year plan in 2013 to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children, and is articulated in three pillars: prevention, protection and response, and care and support. The completion of the initial POA timeline presents an opportunity to develop a new plan with clear policy objectives.

The government of South Africa recognized that achieving the long-term vision of all women and children living free from violence would hinge on a coordinated effort by many government agencies. As such, the Department of Social Development leads the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence Against Women and Children, which includes the Department of Women, the Department of Basic Education, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, South African Police Service, National Prosecuting Authority, and the Department of Home Affairs. However, this approach led to a multitude of different policies, strategies, and programs across the government, making it exceedingly difficult to collect and harmonize data and reporting to evaluate the effectiveness of the POA as a whole. Furthermore, funding for the POA was scattered across departments implementing specific programs, and different programs were more adequately funded than others. These government departments and programs collaborate with civil society, the media, businesses, communities, and families, each creating plans for many stakeholders to work together to prevent and respond to violence. Yet, civil society interventions did not form part of the POA reporting process, leaving out crucial data and evidence from violence prevention and response services across the country.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND STATUS:

A diagnostic review by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) found that the POA did not have a clear theory of change or logic for interventions; was disconnected from other government planning instruments such as the annual departmental performance plans; relied too heavily on administrative data; and included unclear or problematic definitions of some indicators. DPME recommended that the POA be revised. The Department of Social Development is currently updating the POA, specifically emphasizing improved and consistent data collection and collaboration between departments and other stakeholders. DPME will continue to advise on how to incorporate evaluation findings into the new version.

South Africa also has a Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), a set of 14 priority outcomes and indicators intended to monitor the performance of agencies and departments in key areas of national interest, which include addressing violence and violence against women and children. The current MTSF will end in 2019, and the government will issue a new MTSF after the 2019 elections that outlines its priorities for the next 5 years.

DPME, DSD, and other government departments hope to create a common set of concrete, measurable indicators between the new MTSF and POA, enabling the government to realistically track and evaluate its progress on addressing violence against women and children across government activities, sectors, and territories. The indicators should incentivize the government to provide justice to victims of violence, invest in real prevention work in communities, and encourage greater collaboration across government actors. As such, the indicators should be easily translatable into feasible programs and interventions. In addition to developing a common set of priority indicators, DPME and DSD will need to create a simplified process for each department with a program that falls under the POA to report on those priority indicators, and delineate roles and responsibilities for the collection, synthesis, and analysis of that information.

KEY CHALLENGES:

Violence against women and children is a complex policy problem that requires a comprehensive approach. This is challenging to implement, specifically in the following ways:

- **Collaboration:** Despite the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence Against Women and Children and several coordination forums which meet quarterly, collaboration across government and integration of services at the community level have not improved, and the many programs falling under the broad POA remain disjointed. Collaboration with civil society organizations, which provide most of the services, is also weak.
- **Prioritization:** In an effort to be comprehensive, the previous POA was too ambitious. A challenge moving forward will be defining a few clear priorities with a greater focus on preventative approaches, and indicators to track their progress, based on research evidence.
- **Funding:** The current level of funding does not match the scale of the problem, and funding is unevenly distributed across departments and programs under the POA. Besides raising additional funds, South Africa will need to explore opportunities for more cost-effective programming. Currently, there are no resources specifically dedicated to data collection and monitoring and evaluation.
- **Collecting data to measure success:** Receiving comparable and complete data on programs under the POA has been difficult. Besides the overabundance of indicators in the initial POA, the indicators in the MTSF have been criticized for being inadequate. DPME and DSD will need to not only prioritize a set of measurable indicators common to the POA and MTSF, but simplify the process of data collection by a multitude of government departments and programs, including by moving from paper-heavy reporting processes to digitized systems linked between departments.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Impactful programs: There have been several successful programs in South Africa that fall under the POA. The Isibindi Program is a notable example that achieves far reach at low cost, due to its model of training and partnering with community members. Originally developed in response to the HIV epidemic that left many children orphaned and vulnerable, the Isibindi Program aims to strengthen families and protect children from violence and neglect.¹ The program provides in-home services to children by trained child and youth care workers (CYCWs) who provide daily practical and therapeutic support to the children at home, building relationships with the children; teaching them about nutrition, health, hygiene, and life skills; and helping with basic chores.² The Safe Parks program component creates safe spaces where children can go after school or on weekends to play, eat, study, or receive care and educational and counselling support.³ The more than 300 Isibindi projects across South Africa have reached over 100,000 children.⁴ However, like other programs tested in the country, Isibindi remains underfunded and has not yet been effectively institutionalized in the Department of Social Development service delivery model, though there are efforts to address this.
- Increasing evaluation use: The Department of Social Development has made significant investments in evaluations in the recent years, fostering a strong partnership with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. It is thus well poised to use evidence to inform the design and implementation of programs and plans moving forward. The growing collaboration between the departments will also help to harmonize the POA and MTSF.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- The Government of South Africa, led by DSD and DPME, will develop a unified vision for the POA and MTSF, with a focus on articulating clear, concrete, and measurable indicators. In addition to using results from the DPME diagnostic review of the POA, the departments will incorporate information and feedback from consultations with communities, NGOs, donors, and other departments.
- The team is looking forward to input on how to use evidence to clearly define a problem and how to weigh different pieces of evidence when refining a policy. This will be useful as they construct a monitoring and evaluation framework that tracks the right indicators to evaluate the POA as a whole, and capture the government's progress towards addressing violence against women and children.
- They also seek input on what types of indicators at the policy level can best be used to incentivize government to generate greater action, financing, and support.
- Finally, they are looking for insights into how to translate strategy and vision into implementable, measurable, and coordinated programs that will be carried out by a variety of different departments and organizations.

¹ Isibindi and Safe Parks, UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/protection_20093.html

² ISIBINDI- Creating Circles of Care, the National Association of Child Care Workers <http://www.naccw.org.za/isibindi>

³ Isibindi and Safe Parks, UNICEF https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/protection_20093.html

⁴ ISIBINDI- Creating Circles of Care, the National Association of Child Care Workers <http://www.naccw.org.za/isibindi>

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