

THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality

“We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear.”

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

PRESS RELEASE

Mandela Initiative Action Dialogue to combat violence against children

CAPE TOWN, 24 May 2017 – A process to inform better inter-sectoral collaboration on preventing violence against children, including reviewing the current Programme of Action and how it could be improved when a new Programme is drafted next year, started this week. This came as leading experts this week gathered for an action dialogue, hosted by the Mandela Initiative, to identify key priorities to reduce violence against children, and commit to actions to break the intergenerational cycle of violence. Over two days, these experts unpacked the latest research and discussed how to strengthen the child protection system.

“The dialogue allowed participants to think creatively about the research–policy interface, for example, how to ensure that the next National Programme of Action to end violence against children is evidence based; and explore how to improve practice, and inter-sectoral collaboration,” said Emeritus Professor Francis Wilson of the Mandela Initiative.

Recent studies shed new light on:

The nature and scale of violence

Most children experience and/or witness multiple forms of violence in the home, family, community and school, usually at the hands of someone they know. Violence affects children of all ages. Children under the age of five are most likely to be abused and killed in the home, while teenage boys are at increased risk of being killed in the context of male-on-male interpersonal violence.

- 1 in 3 children are victims of sexual violence and physical abuse before they reach the age of 18, whilst 12% of children report neglect and 16% report emotional abuse.
- In 2013/2014, 29% (18,524) of sexual offences reported to the police were children under the age of 18 years – equating to 51 cases a day. N.B. the crime statistics do not give child-specific information every year – 2013/14 is the latest information.
- The rape-murder of children is not an unusual event (1 every 3rd day).

Risk factors

The Inter-Ministerial Committee, through UNICEF, commissioned a study to look at the root causes and structural determinants of violence. This study was led by the University of Cape Town (UCT). The report acknowledges that causes of violence are complex and the web of interrelated risks needs to be understood in order to identify protective factors that enhance resilience in children. Contributing factors include poverty, poor living conditions, mental health and substance abuse – individually and collectively, these increase the chances of abandonment, abuse and neglect. The availability of weapons in the community and exposure to crime also increase the risk for violence. However, stated Professor Shanaaz Mathews of the Children's Institute (CI), UCT: “Care arrangements, family structure and conflict in the home are key determinants where children living in households where neither parent is present are at the increased risk for violence.”

The complex interaction of social and personal factors contribute to a never-ending intergenerational cycle of violence and abuse where victims are at an increased risk of revictimisation, or even becoming perpetrators themselves. In addition, caregivers' ability to provide nurturing care and support is influenced by their own

THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality

experiences of trauma, such as child-maltreatment and intimate partner violence. And their children's trauma are likely to trigger a re-experience of their own trauma. The parent-child relationship is likely to be negatively affected in these cases. In this way, intergenerational violence reduces the chances of creating an environment that is supportive and conducive to recovery after trauma. Support for parents can, however, break this cycle and increase protection for children.

The impact of violence on individuals, the cost to the economy

The effects of child abuse go beyond physical injuries and visible scars and impact on a child's intellectual, social, psychological, and emotional development, and if experienced in the early years can even affect brain development. Abuse can reduce academic performance, and is linked to aggressive behaviour in later life, especially among boys. Associate Professor Cathy Ward (UCT), Celia Hsiao (Save the Children South Africa), and a team of international researchers calculated the societal cost. "Violence also has a substantial impact on the economy, the cost of disability-adjusted life years lost to violence against children and reduced earnings was estimated at R238 billion in 2015/16," said Professor Ward. "If we prevent violence against children, on the other hand, we save costs by reducing the rates of other national problems, such as HIV infection and substance misuse."

The child protection system is failing to protect children

South Africa has a comprehensive legal framework that establishes a multi-agency child protection system – 11 different government departments, led by the Department of Social Development (DSD), have responsibilities to address violence against children, whilst non-profit organisations provide the bulk of services. The goal of this system is to create a safe and enabling environment for children. However, the government's diagnostic review, presented by Matodzi Amisi, Director in the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, shows that there is an "implementation gap". Consequently, violence against children is not a priority, explained Amisi; that the child protection system is inadequately funded; that there is a shortage of skilled staff; and that oversight and coordination require strengthening. An integrated improvement plan has been finalised to address issues raised in the report with timeframes which include reviewing the Programme of Action, amongst others.

A tracking study by the CI – which looked at how reported cases of child abuse in five provinces are processed in the child protection system – showed that, in practice, children are receiving fragmented services that are potentially more damaging to their long-term physical and psychological wellbeing. Lucy Jamieson (CI) said: "We found that police and social services collaborated in only 8% of reported abuse cases. The lack of inter-sectoral collaboration and lack of human resources are preventing children from accessing therapeutic and support services, and allowing perpetrators to continue to abuse children without any form of criminal investigation."

Action

There is an urgent need for interventions to strengthen families and to reduce household poverty, thereby reducing risk for emotional and physical violence in childhood. It is also necessary to improve inter-sectoral collaboration to ensure that victims receive responsive child protection services and access therapeutic and support services. "The Department of Social Development and civil society partners are testing innovative ways of preventing violence. Parenting programmes and community-based services such as Isibindi are showing promise," said Conny Nxumalo, DSD Deputy-Director General.

UNICEF South Africa, which provides technical assistance and support to government and civil society, is also exploring other avenues to improve the child protection system. "Social Development and UNICEF are working on strengthening the existing DSD initiative programme of linking care services to social grants recipients," reported Sinah Moruane, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist.

THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality

The government, through the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence against Women and Children, developed a National Programme of Action (POA) addressing violence against women and children for 2013 - 2018. The DSD, working with all IMC departments, is reviewing the POA, and this week's action dialogue afforded civil society and academics an opportunity to engage with the Programme and recommend actions to strengthen it, based on the most recent evidence. The revised Programme of Action will be widely consulted with civil society and interested parties to ensure buy in and inclusiveness in the protection of children.

"What was recommended aligns closely with the National Development Plan, making preventing violence against children a win-win all round," said Nxumalo.

The dialogue concluded that, in a nutshell, what are needed is supporting families and communities in their efforts to care and protect children, and to change attitudes and practices related to violence.

The Mandela Initiative

The event was organised by the CI and the Safety and Violence Initiative (University of Cape Town), together with the DSD and UNICEF South Africa. This action dialogue is part of a series of Mandela Initiative workshops to give a critical analysis of current and possible policy interventions and practical innovations to overcome poverty and inequality in South Africa. The Mandela Initiative is a university-led national endeavour in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Foundation and is administratively based at UCT.

Key spokespeople:

Child deaths, the causes of violence, the diagnostic review, therapeutic responses

A/ Prof. Shanaaz Mathews, Director, Children's Institute, UCT

C: 083 246 1676

Email: Shanaaz.Mathews@uct.ac.za

The crisis in the child protection system, the tracking study, inter-sectoral collaboration

Lucy Jamieson, Senior Researcher, Children's Institute, UCT

Cell: 082 388 4815

Email: Lucy.Jamieson@uct.ac.za

The extent of violence, economic and social costs, and parenting programmes

A/ Prof. Cathy Ward, Head of Department, Psychology, UCT

C: 084 601 2244

Email: Catherine.Ward@uct.ac.za.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee, the Programme of Action on Violence against Children

Conny Nxumalo, Deputy-Director General, Department of Social Development

Office: 012 312 7386

C: 084 875 1099

Email: ConnyN@dsd.gov.za

The Child Status Index, UNICEF South Africa programme

Sinah Moruane, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF

C: 082 561 0204

THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

Dialogue and action to overcome poverty and inequality

Email: smoruane@unicef.org

Isibindi programme

Donald Nghonyama, Deputy Director, the National Association of Child Care Workers

C: 079 699 1717

Email: donald@naccw.org.za

For general media queries

Morgan Morris, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town

C: 079 522 1142

Email: Morgan.Morris@uct.ac.za

Lumka Oliphant, Department of Social Development

C: 083 4848 067

Email: lumkao@dsd.gov.za

Communications, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Email: comms@dpme.gov.za

Rayana Rassool, UNICEF South Africa

C: 082 851 1168

Email: rrassool@unicef.org