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Agency and Citizenship in a Context of Gender-Based Violence

Thea Shahrokh and Joanna Wheeler

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AGENCY AND CITIZENSHIP IN A CONTEXT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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Executive summary

This pilot evaluation explores how citizenship and agency among social activists can be fostered in contexts of urban violence at the local level. Many initiatives and approaches to addressing violence, particularly urban violence, tend to focus on security sector reform and policing, infrastructure and livelihoods. The role of citizens living in slums, informal settlements and housing estates in acting to stop violence and promoting peaceful relations is less understood and supported. In the urban context, violence is often a means of getting access to scarce resources (such as employment), political power, as well as enforcing discriminatory social norms such as those surrounding gender, age, race, religion and ethnicity. The focus of this pilot is to understand how a sense of democratic citizenship and the ability to act on that citizenship at the local level can contribute to reducing different types of urban violence and promote security; and how becoming an activist against violence can contribute to constructing a sense of citizenship. The case study for this analysis is based in the informal settlement of Khayelitsha, Cape Town, and focuses on community activism against gender-based violence.

This pilot evaluation focused on the life trajectories of community activists in Khayelitsha who are actively involved in intervening and preventing gender-based violence. Their activism is connected to a community-based programme called Prevention in Action (PIA). PIA was a programme that aimed to promote action against gender violence at the local level, in part by identifying, training and supporting community engagers and influencers to make direct interventions in situations of gender-based violence.

Through oral testimonies of community activists we evaluate what enables, inhibits and sustains this activism, and what can be done to support and extend it. We also draw out the implications of this activism for improving security and strengthening citizenship and democracy in the city.

Methodology

This evaluation piloted an oral testimony approach, which is a structured dialogue that gives research participants significant control over their own testimony, and provides in-depth insights into their life histories. We used visual methods to facilitate the oral testimonies, including spatial maps, rivers of life, and key moment maps. These factors are critical in terms of respecting the sensitivity of the subject of violence and giving narrators the courage to address complex social and political issues at a very personal level. This is important for the participants in this evaluation, many of whom have experienced gender-based violence themselves, and have direct experience of it affecting others. Activists, government officials, civil society representatives and academic researchers generated further key insights on the recommendations for policy and practice through a multi-stakeholder dialogue event.

Evaluation framework: agency, citizen action and violence

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the role of community activists by understanding them as individuals, with relationships, aspirations and histories. We can understand more about how and why violence has become a part of their lives by situating their life histories in relation to the influences and contexts in which they live and work. Although gender-based violence is the entry point for discussing people's activism, their life histories demonstrate the linkages between how different forms of violence are interconnected (including intimate, criminal, public, political and state-sponsored). Their stories illustrate how, in the context of urban violence, different forms of violence are interconnected and cannot be considered in isolation.

An in-depth understanding of the life choices and life chances of community activists means that we are able to understand more about what enables people to take action against violence, within their homes, communities and cities. This requires seeing those living in contexts of violence as potential active citizens, who are able to claim their rights to security and demand greater accountability, as well as act directly to mitigate violence.

Agency within this evaluation is taken to mean that people play an active role in shaping their own lives and the relationships that they have with others. Agency reflects how people recognise the power that they hold, their capacity to use this power in order to make their own decisions, and take their own actions within their complex social and political environment.

In this context, citizenship is both a legal standing with respect to the state, but also the capacity to act in relation to public authority in ways beyond the legal framing of rights and duties. This capacity to act involves both a horizontal relationship with and within the family and community, as well as a vertical relationship with the state. In a context of very high levels of violence, questions of citizenship become more acute, as the lack of security can erode the relationship between citizens and the state, as well as the relationship between citizens and their communities. The focus of the pilot is on micro-level and community-based interventions and as such, we aim to address how a sense of citizenship is connected to active participation at the local level, including within the intimate sphere.

Where agency increases confidence and knowledge, people can begin to see themselves as citizens with rights, even if those rights are not being realised. Increased civic and political knowledge and a greater sense of awareness of rights can empower citizens to express their agency in the form of citizen action, and hold governments to account. Citizen action in this context means people participating in democratic life, holding governance actors and processes to account, and exercising their rights and responsibilities for the transformation of society. Where agency is enabled in this way, it is often supported through networks based on solidarity and mutual support. The complex social dynamics that lie within and between families, communities and institutions affect these networks.

What enables, inhibits and sustains activism against violence?

Within the context of regularised high levels of violence and gender-based discrimination, this evaluation has provided insight into the factors that enable agency to reduce this violence and how this relates to the wider issues of citizenship, governance and security in the township context of Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

Enabling factors

Empathy

In an everyday context of very high levels of violence, the loss of empathy through the banalisation of violent acts becomes a significant barrier to a sense of political community and citizenship. The revival and fostering of empathy for the circumstances of violence in which people live was a key factor for enabling personal strength and collective action against violence. This has clear implications for policy and practice in that fostering empathy is not usually within the purview of state-sponsored security reforms, and yet this evaluation found empathy at the centre of the shift towards activism to halt violence.

Interpersonal relationships

Secondly, this empathy was necessary for interpersonal relationships that could further enable activism against violence. While Prevention in Action provided financial incentives for direct action against violence, the courage and personal resilience required to take a public stance against violence and persuade others to do so relied on strength of interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships often break down in contexts of violence, and this

evaluation shows how central they are to inspiring agency in those living with violence, and enabling activism that is effective at addressing gender-based violence and other forms of violence. The importance of these relationships also speaks to the significance of horizontal associations. Recognition by peers is an important catalyst in building citizenship identity. This hidden aspect of the conditions required to enable agency is not explicitly addressed in many social programmes aimed at reducing violence, or considered in many interventions to improve governance.

Claiming individual and collective rights

Finally, in some cases agency was directed towards claiming individual and collective rights. The evidence demonstrates that agency can contribute towards greater citizenship when actions are framed and considered as demands for accountability and the fulfilment of rights. It is not the case that all the examples of agency identified led to citizenship action, but it is clear that underlying empathy and interpersonal relationships were major contributors to the evolution of citizenship agency, where the claims made on the state and local governance structures directly related to the reduction of violence. Through taking action against violence, the activists in this pilot gained a sense of how the wider political system is failing them and what their role could be as citizens to address it.

Inhibiting factors

Discriminatory norms

This evaluation demonstrates how discriminatory norms, especially those related to gender, are constraining agency that can contribute to citizenship. Sustaining agency that addresses the underlying causes of violence within the urban context in South Africa is closely linked to addressing these norms. The activists involved in the pilot described how these norms are pervasive and persistent, and their testimonies demonstrate the ways this constrains their individual agency as well as the prospects for collective agency.

Personal risk

Discriminatory norms, including those related to gender, are pervasive and this heightens the negative repercussions that activists face in challenging them. This becomes a countervailing influence to the positive horizontal associations built through activism, where backlash has the potential to isolate and marginalise those taking action. This points to the importance of understanding the extent of the risk involved for individual activists in addressing violence. Many activists experienced acute personal risk over the long term as a result of their work. Policies and programmes designed to encourage citizen action against violence must consider carefully the ways that this action exposes activists to risks and how these can be addressed.

The systemic relationship between violence, poverty and inequality

The systemic nature of the relationship between violence, poverty and inequality within the township of Khayelitsha means that prospects for transformative social change are not straightforward. In the testimonies of activists, these three features of life in Khayelitsha become almost inextricably linked, making the role of the activists very difficult. Activists are searching for openings within this complex web in order to challenge violence, but can be undermined by the wider dynamics. It is this complexity that is also related to the risks that activists experience, and the difficulty in sustaining their work in the medium to long term.

Lack of institutional accountability and responsiveness

Finally, poor institutional accountability and responsiveness can also inhibit and undermine activism. Where people see the state as perpetuating violence through the reinforcement of discriminatory norms and as ineffective in acting to prevent and reduce violence, then the vertical relationships necessary for democratic citizenship are damaged. In Khayelitsha, the breakdown between community leadership and the police is tied up in the wider struggle for

political power at the provincial and national levels. Failures of accountability are therefore part of the overall dynamics of violence, poverty and inequality, and these affect the prospects for activism very directly.

Sustaining factors

This evaluation shows some of the factors that can contribute to sustained agency to reduce violence. For activists, the personal costs and risks can be balanced to a certain extent through ongoing support and attention to emotional wellbeing, and recognition of their contributions. If this relational aspect is addressed alongside the means for dignified livelihoods, activists can make sustained contributions to social development that contribute to violence reduction. While all these aspects are not within the purview of one particular programme or policy, if there are significant gaps it is likely to undermine the potential for agency that builds citizenship and responsive governance.

The testimonies of activists show how they accumulate relational power through networks for action that connect them to other committed individuals within and outside their township. The importance of these wider networks for sustaining activism is well researched in other contexts of urban violence. Sustained activism connected to wider networks can in turn support a process of constructing citizen action that is grounded in local identity. That is, citizen action against violence that is informed by the local context and its constraints and possibilities, is more sustainable and will have greater impact when combined with external interventions that address wider systemic issues. Shifts in the responsiveness and accountability of institutions responsible for addressing violence and its underlying causes require locally relevant and sustained citizen action. The testimonies of the activists in this pilot provide insight into how this can happen.

Conclusions

The testimonies collected through this pilot point to the importance of understanding activism as a journey for which there is not a proscribed path or set of steps. The lives of individual activists are as complex as the situations in which they live and work. And yet, this pilot has identified some important trends and patterns within these life trajectories. Policy and programme interventions aimed at reducing violence, and particularly gender-based violence, need to give greater attention to what enables, sustains, and inhibits activism outside of the boundaries of particular projects. In the long term, the contributions that these activists can make to greater security can be substantial.

Based on this pilot, there are recommendations on how policy and programming can strengthen the role of the community as citizens in violence prevention and the potential for democratic outcomes:

- At the national and international level, there are policy development gaps on the role of the community in violence prevention. The current role assigned to the community in violence prevention and mitigation is as populations to be educated, sources of information, or individuals who should take more responsibility for themselves. This should be reframed as citizens as potential partners who can contribute independently to the common project of building safer communities.

Recommendations for locally relevant and responsive policy and practice

- It is important that policies addressing violence prevention and mitigation link between local, provincial and national levels. Learning needs to take place between each level to ensure that policies are responsive to the grass roots reality of how positive change happens in contexts of urban violence, and that national policy supports this.

- Diverse stakeholders need to be engaged in networks working to prevent and reduce gender-based violence, including residents, state partners, informal institutions and civil society, in order to support system-wide shifts. This process involves opening up both informal and formal opportunities for dialogue to support different actors to work together for change.
- Working with citizens' own understanding of their context through community engagement strategies will help ensure that interventions to address violence engage with and challenge the sociocultural and power dynamics that may impede their uptake. This is important for restoring inclusive relationships within communities where violent realities have eroded trust and isolated individuals, restricting opportunities for citizenship. Working with men and boys as well as women as part of the solution to gender-based violence will significantly contribute to transformative social change.
- Engage within the community to implement services that respond to the context of violence where it happens; this involves increasing visibility of services and understanding the social and cultural dimensions. The importance of working with local infrastructure and organisations is key; where these actors are able to have ownership over the implementation of the programme there is greater potential for democratic structures and longer term change. This is also relevant to the way research on violence mitigation is approached.

Recommendations for enabling and sustaining citizen agency and action

- Enabling space and time for relationships is critical. Interpersonal relationships are integral to building personal strength to take action, and the mobilisation of activist networks can help build alliances for change within the wider community.
- Interventions need to include learning and skills-building with official recognition, in order to enhance sustainable livelihoods and employment opportunities. This includes formal recognition of the experiences and skills of activists, and the work they are doing.
- Recognise emotion as a critical influence in the process of social change, in the context of gender-based violence. Personal connections and empathy provide an important catalyst for action, and emotional support and consideration of personal, social and material wellbeing can help ensure that action, and activism is sustained.

These recommendations are of particular relevance to the role of the police as a state institution. Police responsiveness and accountability on issues of violence within intimate, community and institutional spaces are critical for rebuilding trusting relationships with citizens and in catalysing wider citizen action. Activists emphasised the importance of full cooperation from the police including more transparency on the status of particular cases of violence, and increased responsiveness of the police to gender-based violence.

1 Introduction

'I wanted to bring people from within the urban settlement together so that we can be united to fight this violence which is happening in our area. Because it is not only about the abuse that is happening at home, but also the violence that is happening outside.'

(Woman, community activist, informal settlement in Cape Town)

'I want to change people's lives. I want [to] make them understand and accept themselves and their life. To change their way of thinking, thinking like the way we were thinking before, like thinking it was accepted for people to be hit – changing this and making them feel comfortable in their homes, and making people feel comfortable as themselves.'

(Woman, community activist, informal settlement in Cape Town)

Through this pilot we aim to explore how citizenship and agency among social activists can be fostered in contexts of urban violence at the local level. Many initiatives and approaches to addressing violence, particularly urban violence, tend to focus on security sector reform and policing, infrastructure and livelihoods. The role of citizens living in slums, informal settlements and housing estates in acting to stop violence and promoting peaceful relations is less understood and supported. In the urban context, violence is often a means of getting access to scarce resources (such as employment), political power, and drugs, as well as used to enforce discriminatory social norms such as those surrounding gender, age, race, religion and ethnicity. The focus of this pilot is to understand how a sense of democratic citizenship and the ability to act on that citizenship at the local level can contribute to reducing different types of urban violence, and how becoming an activist against violence can also contribute to a sense of citizenship. The case study for this analysis is based in the informal settlement of Khayelitsha, Cape Town; it positions community activism against gender-based violence in the context of citizenship building. The results of the pilot provide recommendations for initiatives that aim to transform the entrenched attitudes and norms that perpetuate inequalities and discriminations between men and women, and empower citizens to act against violence where they live in ways that affirm democratic governance and citizenship.

The aim of the pilot is to better understand the life trajectories of 'community engagers and influencers' in Khayelitsha who are actively involved in intervening and preventing gender-based violence through a community-based programme called Prevention in Action (PIA). Through an oral testimony method, we evaluate what sustains, inhibits and inspires this activism, and what can be done to support and extend it. We also draw out the implications of this activism for citizenship and democracy at the local level. In order to build effective recommendations for policy and practice, these life trajectories are considered in relation to the current policy context of Cape Town, both in terms of government and civil society approaches to urban safety and violence mitigation. The PIA initiative defines gender-based violence as violence experienced by women or men that is related to their socially constructed gender roles and includes sexual violence, physical violence and a range of other verbal, psychological or economic forms of violence (Carpenter 2006 and deKeserdy 2000 in Parker 2013). Although in this study gender-based violence is the entry point for discussing people's lives, this is an entry point for tracing how different forms of violence are interconnected (intimate, criminal, public, political and state-sponsored). We aim to build a deeper understanding of the persistent nature of violence in social interactions, and what kinds of responses and interventions break through the cycles of transmission (Pearce 2007).

2 Context of Cape Town and South Africa

South Africa has a reputation for being both one of the most unequal (World Bank 2012) and violent countries in the world (UNODC 2000). Post-apartheid economic transformation has seen change in the racial profile of the top ten per cent of earners, but this has not been matched by improved economic conditions for the poor majority (Leibbrandt *et al.* 2010), despite significant state investment in basic infrastructure and services like electricity, water and sanitation. Indeed, inequality has widened, and the last ten years have witnessed substantial migration to the larger cities and the flourishing of urban informal settlements (Huchzermeyer 2011).

Concurrent with this migration has been the rise of civil forms of violence, including both protests against poor government 'service delivery' and, more recently, xenophobic attacks on foreign migrants from the rest of Africa living in poor areas of the cities (Von Holdt *et al.* 2011; Alexander 2010).

At the same time the crime rate has remained high, albeit improving slowly, with the country regularly reported to be in the top few countries in the world in terms of murder and violent crime (UNODC 2011). Of particular concern is gender-based violence, with domestic abuse and rape reported amongst the highest in the world. For example, a 2009 survey by the Medical Research Council found that a striking 25 per cent of male respondents admitted to committing rape (Smith 2009). Harris (2001) argues that South Africa has a culture of violence in areas inhabited by the black urban poor; violence is used to resolve the most minor of conflicts; violence is associated with alcohol abuse and patriarchal gender relations, and is reinforced by an ineffective justice system. These points are reinforced by a 2009 International Organization for Migration (IOM) study which found that xenophobic violence in South Africa – and especially in the May 2008 attacks – should not be isolated from a more general history of violence in informal settlements and townships in South Africa, adding that much of the published literature points to a culture of violence where it is endorsed and accepted as socially legitimate in terms of solving problems and attaining justice and material goals (e.g. Kynoch 2005; Hamber 1999).

Not surprisingly therefore, in addition to criminal, social and sexual forms, violence is also central to political life in South Africa, especially in poor, urban settlements. Recent work on popular protest in these spaces – usually around the right to settle in the city and access services like water, electricity and transport – has revealed both a significant growth in the number of protests (Alexander 2010) and in the number of violent protests (Alexander, Runciman and Ngwane 2013). This research also suggests that while police killings during these protests are substantially on the rise in South Africa, they are not the cause of the violence. Rather, it is the unresponsiveness of the state to anything but protest that leads to frustrations boiling over. Hence, when protests get violent, 'it often means that peaceful means, such as *imbizos* (assembly or gathering), local councils, and even the president's hotline and the public protector, have been exhausted' (Grant 2014: 1). State unresponsiveness to anything but violence is aptly captured by Von Holdt *et al.* (2011) in the title of their research on protests: *The Smoke that Calls*.

Finally, frustration with the state in poor, black urban settlements should not be interpreted as opposition to the African National Congress (ANC) party that governs the state – at least not to date (Booyesen 2012). Such is the legacy of the liberation credentials of the ANC combined with the enduring sociological reality of race in South Africa, plus the state patronage opportunities for community leaders aligned to the ANC (Piper 2014), and the lack of a credible black-led opposition, that electoral politics is yet to shift significantly. Popular politics, however, has changed significantly with protest and violence increasingly in use to force the hand of the state.

Cape Town is no exception to these wider patterns, and in the last few years migration has increased: in 2008 there were an estimated 220 informal settlements housing some 150,000 shacks, or over half a million people, in a city of three and a half million (City of Cape Town 2008). Further, not only is the crime rate above the national average, but Cape Town has become recognised as the murder capital of the country, and also the place that has the most serious violence linked to gangs dealing in drugs (CSVN 2010). In addition, the xenophobic attacks that swept the country in 2008 also manifest in the city, with attacks on foreign shopkeepers in poor areas noted in the local media.

Violence, like poverty and social exclusion, is geographically concentrated and specific in cities. In Cape Town, this is particularly the case given the racial and socioeconomic legacy of apartheid and the *de facto* segregation that persists in much of the city. Both vulnerability and insecurity are spatially specific within the township, and different groups have distinct experiences of this. During prior research conducted in Imizamo Yethu (township in Hout Bay), young men who were illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe and Malawi described an 'invisible line' in the township that they could not cross without being accompanied by another local resident. Young women described certain zones that they could not walk through without risk. *Shebeens* (informal bars located within the townships) and taverns were linked to violence for particular people at certain times of the day, as were taxi association strongholds, and drug-trafficking and drug usage sites (Piper and Wheeler n.d.).

Finally, a key difference in Cape Town from much of the rest of the country is that the city is ruled by the Democratic Alliance (DA) and not the ANC, undermining the patronage politics that typifies state–society relations in poor, black urban settlements in much of the rest of the country. However, given the association of the DA with the interests of white South Africa, this difference reinvigorates race politics in a way that is often destructive of building trust between poor, black communities and the local state (Piper 2014).

Box 2.1 The township of Khayelitsha

Geographically, Khayelitsha is situated in the Cape Flats some 26km from the central business district of Cape Town, and is bordered by the N2 highway to the north and the False Bay coast to the south, with Mitchell's Plain to the west. The *Xhosa* phrase for 'new home', Khayelitsha is one of the youngest, largest and fastest growing townships to emerge in South Africa. It was formed in the Cape Flats in the mid-1980s, and today the area is also rated the third biggest township after Soweto in Johannesburg and Mdantsane township in East London, South Africa (Ndingaye 2005: 47) with an estimated population of around 400,000 people according to the 2011 Census.

According to the City of Cape Town (2006: 1–17) Urban Renewable Report, 91 per cent of the population of Khayelitsha is Black African and 95 per cent speak *isiXhosa*. Further, 45 per cent of the households are headed by females and 75 per cent of the population is under the age of 35. According to a 2007 report by the City of Cape Town (Small 2007) 71 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, 24 per cent are without electricity, 17 per cent are without piped water, seven per cent of the residents have no education, three per cent have tertiary education, 25 per cent of the population is infected with HIV/AIDS, 32 per cent live in formal houses whilst 39 per cent live in shacks.

A stronghold of African National Congress (ANC) support since its inception, Khayelitsha is also the site of activity for numerous NGOs and social movements that look to address its myriad of social issues. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) that works on HIV/AIDS has long worked in Khayelitsha, as well as kindred NGOs such as the Social Justice Coalition that works on sanitation and violence, and the Equal Education campaign and Sonke Gender Justice movements. More radical housing social movements such as *Abahlali baseMjondolo* and the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign also have a presence in the township. In recent years, key social issues have included xenophobia, with Khayelitsha the site of a substantial number of attacks during the events of 2008, and with restrictions still imposed on the number of foreign-owned shops in the area.

3 Current policy and practice on urban violence

The four pillars of the *National Crime Prevention Strategy* for South Africa are: re-engineering the Criminal Justice System; reducing crime through environmental design; community values and education to ensure community awareness and involvement in crime prevention actions; and transnational crime. The main strategies are offender-based, victim-based, or environment-based; and the main areas of intervention are development, situational and community crime prevention, and improvement to the integrated justice system (Mpumalanga Provincial Government 2014).

The South African Government's *National Development Plan: Vision for 2030* places emphasis on building safer communities through an integrated approach. One of the outcomes identified in the *Medium Term Strategic Framework (2009–2014)* is to ensure that 'all people in South Africa are, and feel safe' (Republic of South Africa, The Presidency 2010).

At the provincial level, in the Western Cape, the Department of Community Safety's objectives are to increase community safety by improving the performance of policing, and to build partnerships and create new forums for promoting active citizenship in community safety (Western Cape Government 2014a). The Department of Social Development has a range of social crime prevention programmes including, for example, programmes for youth at risk: together with non-profit organisations, they run a number of crime prevention programmes that aim to keep young people from committing crimes by keeping them out of gangs and clean from drugs (Western Cape Government 2014c).

In September 2013, the Western Cape Government launched an Integrated Provincial Violence Prevention Policy Framework, bringing together a range of proposals focused on reducing and preventing violence in the Western Cape, which are all in line with the government's 'whole-of-society' approach to increasing safety in communities. All of these proposals involve different role players: the national, provincial and local spheres of government; the private sector; civil society; families and individuals (Western Cape Government 2013).

The Integrated Provincial Violence Prevention Policy was developed in response to a long-standing need for a coherent and integrated framework for understanding and effectively tackling the very high injury and mortality rates resulting from interpersonal and other forms of violence in the Western Cape. Interpersonal violence is the second leading cause of premature deaths in the province after HIV/AIDS. The policy takes a public health approach to reducing and preventing violence, outlining an integrated approach that balances short-term interventions aimed at tackling alcohol abuse, and longer-term interventions aimed at encouraging responsible behaviour by citizens and addressing the social norms that support violence.

Cape Town's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for 2012–17 has as one of its strategic focus areas 'the safe city'. Safety is higher on the agenda than in previous IDPs. Objectives focus on resourcing and training, particularly technical solutions to crime and punishment, and the role of policing (Western Cape Government 2014b). There is increasing mention of neighbourhood and community policing strategies, focusing on improving safety and security through community partnerships. There is strong recognition of the role for *community involvement in crime prevention*; however, there is relative underdevelopment in coordinated strategies. In addition, there is almost no mention of violence in this strategy, apart from the

flagship Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) programme, and no specific mentions of domestic violence or gender-based violence.

Community-based strategies include CeaseFire violence prevention, a neighbourhood watch assistance project, local/neighbourhood safety officers, school resource officers, and neighbourhood safety problem-solving coordinators. Neighbourhood safety problem-solving coordinators provide for a specific police official to be designated as the safety coordinator and problem solver in a particular area. They take the lead in identifying problems that lead to crime and disorder, and work closely with communities and other stakeholders to discover the root causes and, ultimately, to develop and implement solutions. Community police forums are an example of community safety structures within the Metropolitan Police Annual Police Plan 2012/13. Within this there is a role for community centres around sharing of information that may lead to an arrest or to prevention of crime. Strategic organisational thrusts focus on training and partnerships with community policing structures and other departments of national and local government (City of Cape Town 2012).

The *Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading* (VPUU) programme is a public–private partnership funded through German and South African government funding that looks to build urban infrastructure in a way that reduces violence. Beginning in 2005 in the Harare section of Khayelitsha, the project has now expanded to five other sites in the City of Cape Town. VPUU implements an integrative strategy combining the following: community participation, social crime prevention, situational crime prevention, institutional crime prevention, and knowledge management (measuring and assessing progress) (VPUU 2013). Critiques of the VPUU, however, claim that the direct participation of communities in all phases of the project mostly involves co-opting leaders from local organisations onto the leadership structure (Cloete 2013). In 2009 the project was claiming success in reducing the murder rate in Harare by 20 per cent, or over 100 lives. More recently, the project has backed down from making these claims as the murder rate in Khayelitsha has climbed significantly, and there is currently an independent commission of inquiry appointed by the Western Cape Government to investigate policing in Khayelitsha (*ibid.*).

The *Commission of Inquiry into allegations of police inefficiency* began in 2012 and is ongoing. The terms of reference of the Commission require it to investigate complaints received by the Premier (government head) relating to allegations of inefficiency of the South African Police Service (SAPS) stationed at three police stations in Khayelitsha as well as other units of SAPS operating in Khayelitsha, and a breakdown in relations between the Khayelitsha community and members of the SAPS. The Commission is required to report on the findings of its investigation, and make recommendations to municipal and national government. The Commission has been provided with a copy of a complaint made by six non-governmental organisations (Khayelitsha Commission 2014).

The Safer Cities Programme, which has been run by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, is a wider example of a large-scale initiative on urban violence, with programmes running in Johannesburg and Durban (Safer Cities Programme 2014). The Safer Cities approach embraces a holistic and participatory solution to reduce or prevent crime and violence. It supports cities and towns in adopting citywide urban safety strategies and action plans, building on socially inclusive and participatory approaches that contribute to a safer and just city for all. The programme highlights that institutionalisation of the local participatory approach requires security to be incorporated as a cross-cutting dimension in decisions of multiple departments of local government, the criminal justice system and civil society. It is also emphasised that the strengthening of institutions working in violence and crime prevention requires training and coaching, institutional reform and improving urban safety policies.

3.1 A focus on policies to address gender-based violence

Despite its progressive constitution and laws against gender violence, South Africa has among the highest rates of such violence in the world. In 2006, the country adopted a National Action Plan to End Gender Violence: The Kopanong Declaration that emerged from this highlights the need to shift emphasis to prevention.

There is a vast array of innovative preventive strategies and initiatives emerging across the country, covering many of the 'arenas for action' for ending gender-based violence (GBV) in the National Action Plan. However, there are also gaps in coverage overall as well as within given arenas, with the result that initiatives on the ground appear to be making little headway overall (UNICEF 2014).

There is an *emphasis on social crime prevention at policy level*, which promotes a multidisciplinary approach requiring the collaboration of a range of sectors, including health, housing, education, civil society groups, and so on. As such, there are attempts to develop *coordinated strategies of prevention* (e.g. early community intervention, education); response (e.g. dedicated courts, case management); and support (e.g. places of safety, economic empowerment, organisational or community support).

The recent Western Cape Government Violence Prevention Policy, for example, recognises that 'individuals have a duty to prevent violence through the life choices they make, parents through the responsibility they take and the guidance they give, whole communities through the cultural and social norms they establish, and religious institutions and schools in the leadership they provide' (Western Cape Government 2013). Several integrated approaches exist that involve both government and civil society in dealing with the prevalence of GBV at national and provincial levels, however these are underdeveloped. These include the National GBV Council, the 365 Day National Action Plan (NAP), the Integrated Victim Empowerment Policy (IVEP) and the Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCC). Despite these structures, incidence of GBV remains widespread and many survivors do not access TCCs or the one-stop centres that form part of the IVEP programme.

Challenges in operating and implementing these integrated structures and policies include lack of funding, poor coordination among structure members and poor monitoring and evaluation systems. Other issues include the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of some of the structures, including the TCCs, which refer less than half of the cases to the courts. This can act as a deterrent for survivors who might access these services. National conviction rates for sexual offences have also decreased (Machisa and Musariri 2013).

Civil society initiatives are also playing an important role in addressing gender violence. Interventions targeting social norms have developed as an approach to changing enduring patterns of behaviour especially in spaces where more formal (such as legal) and resource-dependent mechanisms are unavailable. Social norms marketing programmes often use an 'education–entertainment' format called 'edutainment'. *Soul City* is an edutainment programme in South Africa targeting gender norms through television and radio drama and related literature and publicity. *Soul City* series four focused in some depth on domestic and intimate partner violence. The project seeks to replace old social norms with new ones which display community responses to domestic violence (Paluck and Ball 2010).

3.2 The Prevention in Action (PIA) programme

In order to explore in practice the role of local-level activists in the response to violence, this pilot worked with community activists involved in a specific intervention called Prevention in Action. We were interested in the programme given its aim to promote action against gender violence at the community level. It was developed and implemented during the course of a four-year initiative by Project Concern International (PCI) in partnership with two provincial networks on violence against women (VAW), based in KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape

respectively. The programme was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) between 2008 and 2012.

At the outset of the programme it was assumed that social norms supportive of VAW were a driving force underlying the ongoing occurrence of VAW. This assumption was contradicted by a baseline survey that found minimal agreement with attitudes and values that supported VAW. This resulted in a reorientation of the programme to focus on transforming 'inaction in response to VAW' into 'action in response to VAW', with a view to developing a model for social mobilisation to prevent VAW. It was conducted in sub-areas of the two focal provinces, with intensive activities and research being conducted in two case study communities: Khayelitsha, Cape Town, and Wentworth, Durban.

The programme intervention model includes the following components:

- An overarching implementation team to lead the process: PCI and the networks managed agreements with sector partners and led the programme through training, capacity development, operational research and monitoring.
- Sector partnerships with organisations that include VAW prevention within their mandates: for example, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, government departments and police services.
- Training and capacity development of sector partners and participants to support programme activities, including a primary structure of community engagers (CEs) directly linked to the sector partner organisations who recruit, train and guide community influencers (CIs), who are resident in intervention communities.
- Community engagers and influencers worked to make direct interventions in situations of gender-based violence, took part in training to understand violence against women and its prevention, and activities to support and mentor other PIA participants. A subset of CIs were also sufficiently capacitated and motivated to establish Prevention in Action committees.
- PIA committees and violence-free zones represent the culmination of the programme where values of VAW prevention are supported by demarcating boundaries and incorporating the colours, logo and slogan of PIA into public and private spaces.

4 Evaluation framing

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the role of community activists by understanding them as individuals, with relationships, aspirations and histories. We can understand more about how and why violence has become a part of their lives by situating their life histories in relation to the influences and contexts in which they live and work. An in-depth understanding of the life choices and life chances of community activists means that we are able to understand more about what enables people to take action against violence, within their homes, communities and cities. This requires seeing those living in contexts of violence as potential active citizens, who are able to claim their rights to security and demand greater accountability as well as act directly to mitigate violence.

The evaluation framing that follows has emerged from the issues and questions prevalent in the oral testimonies of the research participants. Further conceptual clarity has been given through relevant literature.

In this context, we understand citizenship as being both a legal standing in respect to the state, but also a capacity to act in relation to public authority in ways beyond the legal framing of rights and duties. This capacity to act involves both a *horizontal relationship* with and within a community, as well as a *vertical relationship* with the state. In a context of very high levels of violence questions of citizenship become more acute, as the lack of security can erode the relationship between citizens and the state, as well as the relationship between citizens and their communities. The focus of the pilot is on micro-level and community-based interventions, and as such we aim to address *how a sense of citizenship is connected to active participation at the local level, including within the intimate sphere*. This decision is based on a recognition of civic and political action within the township context as being family-based, and connected to community association. The forms of agency people are exercising in turn is related to their sense of identity and in search of recognition, the terms of particular relationships and collectives, and how this strengthens or impedes their aspirations for personal and social justice (Kabeer 2005).

Agency within this evaluation is taken to mean that people play an active role in shaping their own lives and the relationships that they have with others. *Agency reflects how people recognise the power that they hold, and their capacity to use this power* in order to make their own decisions, and take their own actions within their complex social and political environment. Agency links directly to the way in which people can be and act as citizens (Mahmud 2002). Integral to this is a sense of self-worth and belonging, something that violence and gender discrimination erodes (Pearce 2007). It is important to recognise that trajectories of agency are not linear, and often power asymmetries in people's social contexts, and unjust or unequal social structures restrict people's capacities to define their own life choices and pursue their goals. Agency itself, as a constituent of social power, can be utilised in a physically and emotionally harmful way in order to exercise dominance and power over others, for example, through the use of violence and coercion.

Where agency increases confidence, knowledge and personal power, people can begin to see themselves as citizens with rights. Increased civic and political knowledge, and a greater sense of awareness of rights can *empower citizens to express their agency in the form of social action*. Social or citizen action in this context means people participating in democratic life, holding governance actors and processes to account, and exercising their rights and responsibilities for the transformation of society (Gaventa 2012). Where agency is enabled in this way, it is often supported through solidarity and working with others. Relationships and networks are important in providing the emotional and material strength to mobilise for change. This relational power is influenced by the complex social dynamics that lie within and between families, communities and institutions.

If citizenship is to be a useful way of framing agency in relation to violence, then the diversity of people's social roles, identities and obligations must be understood (Stephen 2001). Our approach engages with an analysis of citizenship which makes explicit *the gendered identity, roles and relationships that shape their agency and the interactions between individuals, communities, state and society*; of particular importance are the gendered constructions of individuals and the social norms that direct people's behaviours and beliefs, for example, in terms of the qualities associated with being a man or a woman (Hume 2007). These norms hold power over people through the means of emotional control, social expectations, direct enforcement as well as internal commitment (Boudet, Petesch and Turk 2013), permeating daily life, hence affecting individual and collective agency. We hope that this analysis will provide insight into the changes that are necessary within social relationships for violence to be rejected in many more spaces than it is today.

Our understanding of citizenship rights requires that we recognise the private space as a space of power relations, in particular gendered relations, that has implications for agency and prospects of citizen action (Vargas 2007). For example, rights can be understood as the freedom to make certain personal choices, such as those relating to sexual and reproductive rights. Yet rights in this context can become meaningless if the enabling societal conditions within which they can be realised do not exist (Yuval-Davis 1997). Taking into account these political divisions and hierarchies we often see gendered patterns of entry into citizenship in the public sphere. In the South African context, contestation over access to citizenship rights is part of the national political debate, as well as part of the local discourse around the social and economic problems people face in the townships. For example, the rights to housing and water which are enshrined in the South African constitution have led to violent protests (which could be seen as citizen action) in the tradition of the anti-apartheid struggle, with political parties positioning themselves as the guarantors of these rights, while simultaneously using clientelist tactics to maintain their control (Piper and Bénit-Gbaffou 2014).

Expressions of agency and citizenship and their gendered dimensions are *deeply connected to political power relations in South Africa*, which, with their own dynamics exist in all social spheres – within personal relations, and within social and political domains. The inclusiveness of both formal and informal policy interventions on citizen safety impacts the way in which social identities such as gender, class, ethnicity, and age, for example, interact with people's experience of and expression of civil and political freedoms. Where policies are not inclusive, agency may exist where people attempt to challenge the exclusionary practices within power hierarchies that restrict their equal recognition and participation (Kabeer 2005). Where positive citizen action does emerge in violent contexts there is the potential for power imbalances to be renegotiated and democratic norms and institutions to be deepened.

For people living in the informal, low-income context of the township where diverse forms of violence are entrenched in people's daily lives, there are important issues linked to the spaces being claimed for political participation, and how fighting violence interacts with the way that citizenship is being expressed (Wheeler 2012). Gender-based violence has a particular spatial dimension – it often occurs within the home, but within the hearing of neighbours. This emphasises how an analysis of the spatial dimension of violence, and also of agency, is crucial, and although this is touched on in this analysis where possible, it is an area for further exploration. Grounded in this analytical framing we hope to trace trajectories of empowerment and action in the pursuit of non-violence, and build a deeper understanding of how personal and collective power can help renegotiate the norms and institutions of citizenship in violent contexts. In order to do so we have identified three analytical categories: enabling, inhibiting and sustaining agency. The parameters of each are explained in turn.

4.1 Enabling agency

Enabling agency refers to how and why individuals act in response to violence, for which various possibilities exist. Some may just cope with it (coping agency) and avoid harm to their lives, some may try to mitigate it, and some respond by enacting violence themselves and thus reproduce violence.

How opportunities for agency emerge is integral to understanding how positive change is possible, and how change can happen in violent contexts through people's own actions. The pilot focuses on what motivates and encourages the agency of social activists in response to violence, and how these activists also inspire agency in others.

In situations of violence and conflict people are forced into (and sometimes contribute to) situations of vulnerability, exclusion and insecurity. Recent research in Cape Town (see Piper and Charman 2012) has identified 'violent entrepreneurship', where *spaza* (convenience store) shopkeepers use violence as a means of expanding their business and limiting competition. In the urban context, violence can be an expression of agency: violence is used instrumentally to resolve certain problems. This does not preclude the use of violence for other ends or fully explain gender-based violence, but it is important to note the close relationship in the townships between violence and agency. The focus of this report is on agency that contributes to citizenship and greater inclusion, rather than agency that relies on violence.

4.2 Inhibiting agency

In this pilot we are engaging directly with the violent realities of people's lives; within these realities it is important to recognise that there are actors and influences working to maintain and reinforce patterns of violence and abuse. Within the home and the community complex relations of power and discriminatory social norms are played out through violent acts, working purposefully to restrict the life choices and life chances for individuals and groups. Where these influences undermine a sense of self-recognition, belonging and empowerment, people can experience the closing down of spaces for agency and pathways of empowerment.

4.3 Sustaining agency

The third category is what sustains agency. This is distinct from enabling agency in that it considers how agency can continue and potentially expand over time. It is one thing to intervene in a single instance of gender-based violence, but how is that instance of agency built into ongoing activism, which in turn may be connected to citizenship and engagement in the wider political community? How agency is sustained is deeply linked to its transformative potential at both the individual and collective levels. The sense of empowerment that is enabled through actively resisting the dominant practices and norms that maintain violence and exclusion in society, can open up new opportunities for people to see themselves as citizens able to act on their own behalf and in relation to a range of social issues. Activism at the community level can help rebuild local networks and social tolerance, where violence has eroded relationships and trust. These networks can support people to find solidarity and strength in working with others and enable activists and those they work with to deepen their sense of citizenship on the grounds of their social capital. The identity built through active citizenship can provide a platform for engaging informal and formal actors and structures within the community that have influence to support the evolution of democratic outcomes in addressing violence in urban contexts. What we hope to understand in this pilot evaluation therefore, is the relationship between sustained engagement and action at the community level and long-term shifts in democratic social norms.

4.4 Methodological approach for the fieldwork in Cape Town

4.4.1 Research participants

Over the course of three months we worked with five female community engagers and four male community influencers. We also conducted key informant interviews with programme coordination staff within the Western Cape Network on Violence Against Women. The small sample size reflects the pilot nature of this evaluation, and was purposeful in terms of being able to build meaningful relationships with participants over a short period of time. Community engagers were contacted through the central coordinating team for the Prevention in Action initiative, and community influencers were approached by the community engagers themselves in order to mitigate against insensitivity or misperception at the community level. Participants were given the opportunity to engage with the study findings in order to validate the analysis, as well as to integrate the learning into their own activist trajectories. Activists, government officials, civil society representatives and academic researchers generated further key insights on the recommendations for policy and practice through a multi-stakeholder dialogue event.

4.4.2 Research approach

As this is an evaluation pilot, an important part of the learning from this study was around the methodological approach. The methodology was based on oral testimony which is a structured dialogue that gives research participants significant control over their own testimony, and provides in-depth insights into their lived realities. We used visual methods to facilitate the oral testimonies, including spatial maps, rivers of life, and key moment maps. These factors are critical in terms of respecting the sensitivity of the subject of violence, giving narrators the courage to address complex social and political issues at a very personal level. This is important for the participants in this study, many of whom have experienced gender-based violence themselves, and have direct experience of it affecting others.

Personal life testimonies help us to understand how violence intersects with everyday life and how individual perceptions are shaped by sociocultural factors. As articulated by Hume (2007), it is important to make explicit the emotions inherent in the exploration of violence and to analyse this in relation to the social reality within which you are engaging, and the meaning that is given to particular events. Testimonial approaches enable full and rich descriptions of events that explore complex issues such as power relations, contributing to the legitimacy of the evaluation findings.

The oral testimony process worked at two levels. In order to build initial relationships and trust within the interview process at least two researchers, with translation capacity, worked with community engagers and influencers in pairs, enabling an open discussion about their involvement in the Prevention in Action initiative (which has now concluded) and their lives in Khayelitsha. The testimonies were then further developed through one-on-one dialogues with participants; these conversations moved the focus away from the Prevention in Action initiative towards who they are as people, and their own life histories. This was an important shift in order for us to understand their personal journeys and the factors that contribute to personal power and agency. This one-on-one dialogue also offered the confidentiality and security for participants to talk about sensitive and emotional issues.

During the one-on-one conversations participants identified a moment of emphasis in their testimony: 'an episode' that could be explored in order to understand the dynamics of a particular social experience related to violence. In order to facilitate the depth of the testimony, we included the opportunity to visually express this significant moment through drawing. The use of creative and visual methods is well documented as an important technique for subjects related to trauma and emotional suffering and hardship (Wheeler 2012). Researchers introduced opportunities for visual expression, for example the 'river of

life' method which builds a visual narrative helping people tell stories of their past, present and future.

Through this process, interviewers provided prompts to explore how influences and events have contributed to participants' agency and also where their growth as people had been restricted. We also looked at the actors, relationships, emotions, actions and outcomes within the story being told, and worked with participants to unpack these further.

5 Analysis: enabling, inhibiting and sustaining agency in contexts of violence

What follows is an analysis of the oral testimony interviews conducted with community activists living within Khayelitsha and who had been involved in the Prevention in Action initiative. The analysis is grounded in the evaluation framing outlined above, and organising findings under the three headings of enabling, inhibiting and sustaining agency. In doing so we hope to trace trajectories of empowerment and action in the pursuit of non-violence and build a deeper understanding of how personal and collective power relates to concepts of citizenship in violent contexts.

5.1 Enabling agency

In contexts of violence and conflict people are forced into situations of vulnerability, exclusion and insecurity. How opportunities for agency are inspired and opened up is therefore integral to understanding how positive change is possible, and will be the centre of our analysis for this section.

5.1.1 Empathy and personal connections

Taking action against violence within the context of their immediate community was an important personal and emotional commitment for the community activists involved in this research. Those that had found the strength to engage on these issues in their homes, within their families, and in their communities spoke of the significance of their deep connection to the wellbeing of others, and their anger at the situation of violence in their lives and the lives of their neighbours.

'Why do I do this? To love people, I can't say, because it is not about the money, honestly, I just take their pain and make mine, that's my problem. But this is why my sister says you are going to get sick some day, because you go and take some people's problem and make yours. And I feel so bad if I see a small child suffering because I see that she has nowhere to go if the mother is ignoring her, who is going to look after her?'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

This commitment to understanding the situation of others is an important part of building citizen identity within a context where violence has penetrated communities, leaving people isolated and individualised. As such it is both something that enables personal agency, and also an important mechanism for mobilising the community in terms of awareness and action. Community engagers worked with the community to understand how issues of violence are impacting individuals' lives, and how this experience relates to the lives of others. This has been empowering for communities where they have seen the possibilities for change, and also where people have realised that their own negative social norms or attitudes had contributed to this context of violence.

We also heard from activists who have politicised a personal experience of violence and channelled their passion on the issue to help others find pathways out of abusive relationships. Stories of people finding the strength to take action against intimate partner violence have included a narrative of prevention – of not wanting anyone to feel the pain that they have experienced.

'For me engaging with people came effortlessly because I was thinking about something that happened to me and something that I could speak with the passion of someone that had been through abuse...'
(Female community engager)

We also heard of instances where violent actors in the community, for example gang members, have made the decision to take action against violence which has involved a complex process of rebuilding of trust and relationships with the wider community.

The Prevention in Action initiative worked to build the personal power of survivors of violence through counselling-related interventions which provided the space for individuals to heal and rebuild positive personal identity. This was significant in the process of being able to relate the detail of personal experiences of violence to others. Investment in the emotional wellbeing of activists has been highly valued by community engagers with counselling having a lasting impact on personal power and decision-making.

5.1.2 Strong interpersonal relationships

Community engagers have seen how to inspire agency and personal power in the people they are working with through building strong relationships. They promote relationships that are built on trust, and that show a meaningful commitment to engaging with and responding to the people they are supporting. As one community engager explained:

'People don't want you to come once and then say goodbye. In order for them to become stronger... when she calls you and she wants you to talk to her about what she is going through, then you must be there.'

The fear connected to intimate partner violence, having been attacked within the community, or in the face of disclosing your HIV status to your family is very powerful. We have heard through this research that the outcome of taking action in these contexts is likely to be further physical and emotional violence as different forms of power are challenged. As such, within the parameters of violence, the nature of the bond built in the process of empowerment has a significant impact on the necessary strength to take the first steps towards action, and for rebuilding self-confidence in yourself and your capacity to have trusting and supportive relationships. This relates to the horizontal aspect of building citizen agency, where social relationships can strengthen the power you see in yourself and others to affect change.

'People trust enough to disclose themselves to me. A couple of those have come and disclose to me for the first time, telling me they don't know how to tell anyone, because they are the head of this family, "and they look up to me, so if I tell them that I am HIV positive then they will be disappointed with me". So when I was educating, we had the two persons, and then I go back to the house for a counselling to try to pray with the person, counsel them and make them understand that they should not feel ashamed so the person will again call me because they feel comfortable talking to me, so they will call me and say that they have said their prayers and they have told their family. At that moment they were crying but now they are happy because they see how strong they are.'
(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

5.1.3 Claiming individual and collective citizenship rights

Community activists spoke of the significance of their own recognition of violence as abuse, and as an abuse of their human rights in driving their action. The provision of training and information in the Prevention in Action initiative on the role of the justice system, and how to access justice through legal mechanisms, provided new avenues for responding to and addressing violence. Where people have seen the direct impact of this in their own lives this has provided the evidence, or positive reinforcement, that changing the situation is possible.

Community engagers explained how having this knowledge catalysed a sense of responsibility to support others 'to know how to act'.

'The opportunity came with Prevention in Action then I realised that I was actually a victim, but that I can do something about it, and I can engage people and open up to other people about my own circumstances and try to show other people that you don't have to stay in a physically abusive relationship, being sworn at and you know being made to feel small and especially mine was from my husband so I was speaking mostly to other women in marriages where these problems were surfacing... Through my actions of standing up to my husband, and then we eventually got the law, he was taken out of the home so now other women saw that they can stand up for themselves through my actions. And other men also got the same punishment as my husband got.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

The shared issue of violence, and its pervasiveness and immediacy in Khayelitsha, acts as a driver for people to work together to effect change. Communities have been acting to demand accountability and responsiveness from public service agencies, with a particular emphasis on law enforcement and the responsibilities of the police. Communities speak of making claims on their citizenship, and how they are taking action to rebuild the relationship with service providers.

'We organised as a community to go to the police station to talk to the police about some the issues that we had with how they treated violent crimes in the community, for example when people are fighting in the street the police will just pass by and do nothing. What we needed them to know was that police presence is not enough, especially when dealing with gang fights, it seems as if by not acting they condone the behaviour. We told them that we need action from them.'

(Man, community activist, Khayelitsha)

5.1.4 Conclusions

In an everyday context of very high levels of violence, the loss of empathy through the banalisation of violent acts becomes a significant barrier to a sense of political community and citizenship (Wheeler 2012). The revival and fostering of empathy for the circumstances of violence in which people live was a key factor for enabling personal strength and collective action against violence. This has clear implications for policy and practice in that fostering empathy is not usually within the purview of state-sponsored security reforms, and yet this evaluation found empathy at the centre of the shift towards activism to halt violence.

Secondly, this empathy was necessary for interpersonal relationships that could further enable activism against violence. While Prevention in Action provided financial incentives for direct action against violence, the courage and personal resilience required to take a public stance against violence and persuade others to do so relied on strength of interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships often break down in a context of violence, and this evaluation shows how central they are to inspiring agency in those living with violence, and enabling activism that is effective at addressing gender-based violence and other forms of violence. The importance of personal relationships also speaks to the significance of horizontal associations, and how the recognition of oneself as a social actor working towards shared goals is an important catalyst in building citizenship identity. This hidden aspect of the conditions required to enable agency is not explicitly addressed in many social programmes aimed at reducing violence, or considered in many interventions to improve governance.

Finally, in some cases agency was directed towards claiming individual and collective rights. As the oral testimonies demonstrate, agency can contribute towards greater citizenship when actions are framed and considered as demands for accountability and the fulfilment of rights.

It is not the case that all the examples of agency identified led to citizenship action, but it is clear that the underlying empathy and interpersonal relationships were major contributors to the evolution of citizenship agency, where the claims made on the state and local governance structures directly related to the reduction of violence. Through taking action against violence, the activists in this pilot gained a sense of how the wider political system is failing them and what their role could be as citizens to address it.

5.2 Inhibiting agency

Building personal and collective power in contexts of violence is complex, and there is not a single pathway or blueprint. This section explores the constraints that are placed upon people in their daily lives, how this interplays with violence and how this inhibits their expressions of power and the choices that they make.

5.2.1 Discriminatory gendered norms

The testimonies of the community engagers and influencers have shown the damaging nature of gendered norms in relation to both men and women's agency within intimate, community and institutional relationships.

These norms control the spaces in which people express agency, and the actions that they take; restrictions are perpetuated further where violence, often perpetrated by men, is used directly as a reinforcement mechanism for these norms. Norms, such as those related to masculinity, also act as deeply rooted barriers to change, and fuel violence. The discriminatory norms made visible through this work show learned biases around gender differences. Community engagers drew upon their own experiences to explain how they see the socialisation of abusive gendered roles within the family as driving the intergenerational transmission of violence.

'If you abuse your girlfriend, it is a way of showing your girlfriend that you love her and you care about her, so you are trying to make her learn so that she can be a good wife. So people don't know. Young men, some of them think that you are supposed to beat your wife, that you are supposed to put the wife down to make her better.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

The entrenched nature of these norms and their reinforcement through violent acts means that enabling agency that is grounded in psychological wellbeing is challenging. Activists spoke of the significance of the deep emotional harm and the destruction to trust that takes place within the context of intimate partner violence. Addressing the physical act of violence must be accompanied by support for emotional wellbeing, and interventions that build the strength to challenge the norms around violence that have been established within that relationship. It is important to understand this complexity within the process of enabling the personal agency of survivors of violence, and the psychological dimensions of this.

[Referring to male partners] *'They have lessened down their levels of wanting to hit, but now because the women were probably so used to that, it is now that the women go out to test the guys. Like how long will it take for you to hit me, and how deep can I go to getting you to that state of mind. So as a result, one of the guys that I was working with, he left his wife because she was just at him the whole time, because she was just seeing how she could get him to react in that violent way.'*

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

Survivors of violence also face challenges in the decisions that they make in accessing justice, in particular where this involves challenging social norms within the community. One community engager spoke of an instance where a woman that was raped went straight to the police station on the grounds of what she understood about forensic evidence and attaining

legal justice. As a result, she was ostracised from the community for not taking the incident to them first.

Discriminatory norms that establish gendered power imbalances are also embedded in the actors and systems that are responsible for informal and institutional responses to issues of violence. Where family elders are involved in the resolution of disputes for married couples, activists explained how women were encouraged to stay silent, and accept violence to protect their reputation and the wellbeing of their children. These norms were often reinforced by women elders who were advocating a strong nuclear family structure. In addition, in relation to the role of the police, community engagers spoke strongly about the gendered dimensions of (a lack of) action within situations of domestic violence. They spoke of the barriers faced by men experiencing violence at the hands of women partners, and the humiliation they would face in relation to this from the police themselves. The police response in terms of violence within the home is embodied as patriarchal power dynamics and the domestic space being outside of the realm of police, or state responsibility:

'If there was a wife calling the police saying that there is a husband beating me up then they will take their own time to come because they know the husband. Sometimes they say "we don't interfere with marriage, so you just need to go to the centres, or to those organisations that deal with marriages or abusive relationships". But now we are working with them, because we introduced them and we are wanting them to become a part of the community committee of PIA.'
(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

5.2.2 Backlash and the breakdown of relationships

The renegotiation of power dynamics brings with it resistance from within the home and the community by those who value their roles within the status quo. For community engagers this has meant aggressive and threatening responses from men and women whose partners they have supported to take action against violence. This has resulted in real danger for a number of the activists, and in these instances informal community networks and police networks have played an important role in providing protection.

'Sometimes the men hate you, say you can't change my wives and their way of thinking, you have come to destroy my marriage because you are single you are not married, what do you know about marriage. This is the way it is. This is the right way, and this is how I am going to build my family, so don't come to my house and change my wife. Or you take a husband and a husband trains with you and she says you have changed him, and he is becoming less of a man, it is difficult.'
(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

Where activists gain recognition and status, this can also generate resentment from those around them, both within the family and the community. Where people are gaining strength and power in their lives, and others are facing an unchanging daily reality, community activists have experienced deeply personal attacks against their new position as an activist within the community, which has prevented them from being able to do their work.

Perceptions of payment for activists have also proven to cause tensions within the community, undermining the legitimacy of their role and their actions. This has created strains between activists and other community members, where people have perceived the driving force for action as being for their own gain. Also, people challenge why that income should not be distributed to all involved. Activists have tried to respond to this by being transparent and communicating effectively with community members on the issue. This has also been raised as an issue by the activists themselves in relation to central management of funding for community initiatives, which at times they have found disempowering where resources appear to be distributed unfairly. This links to a wider point on the importance of

recognition in community initiatives: where activists have felt that their work, and the impact of it is not being recognised by NGO programme coordinators, or by community members this can be frustrating and disempowering for activists; sustaining your commitment when you feel isolated from those around you can be very difficult. This is felt particularly strongly where there is a perceived disconnect between the goals of the different groups.

For many community activists their lives extend beyond, around, and through any particular programme, and it is their own journeys as people that drive and enable action around gender-based violence. However, the question of livelihoods and income generation is an important consideration in a context of extreme poverty where people are negotiating how they will feed and house themselves and their families on a daily basis.

5.2.3 The damaging web of violence, poverty and inequality

The complex and mutually-reinforcing relationship between violence, poverty and inequality within the townships points to the systemic nature of the problem of insecurity. Recurring violent incidents within the community along with sexual and domestic violence severely impact livelihood opportunities, further constraining agency. The testimonies of the community activists show how a lack of access to economic opportunity forces people to adopt strategies which often increase the risk of violence, abuse and exploitation in their lives; for example, drug-related activities, crime and sex work. Disillusionment towards the role of the state in impacting urban poverty within Cape Town for Black African communities constrains people's aspirations for change, limiting their capacity to build agency grounded in citizenship identity. For those who are living with violence at the intimate level, in particular for women where the male household head is traditionally the breadwinner, the impassable boundaries of poverty mean that surviving becomes an expression of their agency.

'Most women first have a list of things to consider before even thinking about getting their "man" arrested for hitting them, often times it is the man that works and she runs the risk of losing out financially if she reports him. What will happen to the children if she causes the family to break up because she relies on him to provide?'

(Man, community activist, Khayelitsha)

Unemployment, depression and disenchantment in residents of Khayelitsha have also been linked to excessive consumption of alcohol and drug abuse. This impacts insecurity within the household and the community where key points within the socioeconomic calendar, for example 'pay day' periods from Friday through to Sunday, increase levels of substance abuse and risk of violence. This is important local knowledge that supports the community activists to develop strategies for responding to this situation, for example, by establishing violence-free zones monitoring commuter pathways during these particular flashpoints.

The work of the community influencers in Khayelitsha has also shown the importance of being able to access spaces where people go to drink, *shebeens* in particular, for working with youth and men to promote action against violence. However, tensions have risen where *shebeens* are being seen to heighten the issues around drinking, and drink-related violence, by extending opening hours. This shows the importance of working with community infrastructure to address violence in a holistic way, which we will discuss further when looking at opportunities to sustain agency.

5.2.4 Poor institutional accountability and responsiveness

The immediacy and closeness of the violence in people's lives in Khayelitsha, and the impact that this has on community relationships and wellbeing means that many people are searching for ways to manage the violence in their lives. For some this means finding ways to negotiate day-to-day safety for themselves and their families; for others, and for the activists involved in this research, this means taking action against and mitigating future violence.

In a context of violence, where the response of state agencies is weak, people can lose hope in the potential for change. For those experiencing violence directly, where justice systems are ineffective, opportunities narrow and the risks involved in speaking out and taking action can become too high. In light of this disconnect between violence and state responsiveness, violence itself can often be reproduced as community members decide to take action into their own hands through mob justice. This violent response is perpetuated by a lack of belief in the capacity of law enforcement to mitigate violence, or for legal mechanisms to deliver justice. Those involved in community activism themselves are then faced with the tension of affirming an ineffective rule of law and stopping mob justice even when they know the perpetrator is guilty.

'Sometimes I wish I could turn a blind eye when this happens because at times all evidence points to this person and they have committed the crime more than once and the community, in this case I know that they will deal with them once and for all. The point of this kind of justice is to teach a lesson and make an example for others with the same thoughts.'

(Man, community activist, Khayelitsha)

This is a response to the erosion of a relationship between citizens and state institutions in delivering justice. As such, the role of the community engagers and influencers in the direct response to incidents of violence at the community level becomes critical, e.g. community engagers are often the first point of contact for community members in situations of domestic violence and abuse, and community influencers within their leadership roles play an important role in bringing local political infrastructure such as street committees into processes of conflict resolution. This enables a democratic form of popular agency to push back where mob justice has emerged as a response. Where police responsiveness has improved in relationship to this, it is really important in terms of sustaining non-violent social action, rebuilding people's citizenship identity and, in turn, relationships with the state.

The local police were identified time and again as having an important role to play in this process, given the remit of their 'protective' responsibility towards citizens and their physical location within Khayelitsha. However, there is a clear demand for them to understand more about the situation within the community, and to be proactive in preventing, and responsive in addressing, violence.

5.2.5 Conclusions

This evaluation demonstrates how discriminatory norms, especially those related to gender, are constraining agency that can contribute to citizenship. Sustaining agency that addresses the underlying causes of violence within the urban context in South Africa is closely linked to addressing these norms. The activists involved in the pilot described how these norms are pervasive and persistent, and their testimonies demonstrate the ways this constrains their individual agency as well as the prospects for collective agency.

Discriminatory norms, including those related to gender, are pervasive and this heightens the negative repercussions that activists face in challenging them. This becomes a countervailing influence to the positive horizontal associations built through activism, where backlash has the potential to isolate and marginalise those taking action. This points to the importance of understanding the extent of the risk involved for individual activists in addressing violence. Many activists experienced acute personal risk over the long term as a result of their work. Policies and programmes designed to encourage citizen action against violence must consider carefully the ways that this action exposes activists to risks and how these can be addressed.

The systemic nature of the relationship between violence, poverty and inequality within the township of Khayelitsha means that prospects for transformative social change are not

straightforward. In relation to the testimonies of activists, these three features of life in Khayelitsha become almost inextricably linked, making the role of the activists very difficult. Activists are searching for openings within this complex web to challenge violence, but can be undermined by the wider dynamics. It is this complexity that is also related to the risks that activists experience, and the difficulty in sustaining their work in the medium to long term.

Finally, poor institutional accountability and responsiveness can also inhibit and undermine activism. Where people see the state as perpetuating violence through the reinforcement of discriminatory norms and as ineffective in acting to prevent and reduce violence, then the vertical relationships necessary for democratic citizenship are damaged. In the context of South Africa, the lack of accountable and responsive government is one of the factors that perpetuates violence, poverty and inequality. As argued earlier, in Khayelitsha the breakdown between community leadership and the police is tied up in the wider struggle for political power at the provincial and national levels. Failures of accountability are therefore part of the overall dynamics of violence, poverty and inequality, and these affect the prospects for activism very directly.

5.3 Sustaining agency

Where personal and collective power provides the strength and resources to resist dominant practices and norms that maintain violence and exclusion in society, new opportunities for citizenship are opened up. This section explores how agency is sustained over the long term within the violent realities of people's daily lives, in order to learn lessons regarding its transformative potential for addressing violence and promoting more democratic governance.

5.3.1 Ensuring emotional wellbeing and ongoing support

Transforming self-confidence and emotional strength is a complex process within the context of everyday violence, poverty and inequality. Community engagers expressed how the respect and trust built with fellow activists was an empowering process. For many, engaging in social activism provided a catalyst for building a sense of self-worth, but also to rebuild a positive relationship with the community as a whole. Community engagers were able to identify opportunities for positive social change where previously they felt hopeless and disconnected. Where community engagers have received different forms of counselling, this has helped to build self-confidence and esteem which has provided strong foundations for sustaining agency. Some activists also spoke of the importance of ongoing counselling to help them deal with the often very traumatic violent incidents they were exposed to. In addition, the open and transparent conversations and continued opportunities for learning that have been enabled through organisational mentors have also supported this process. When working within the harsh reality of violence and poverty within your own community, having the space and time to discuss and reflect is important for ensuring considered decision-making and positive action.

'My manager and another woman who was also in the management they were there for us and every time we would talk, we were able to talk about anything. The other one was a social worker so with our experience with the groups we would come in and tell them, they would give us the counselling and talk to us. If you had a problem, because there were challenges in the group so we would call them or maybe when we come to a training he would tell us... we would be able to tell him anything, and he was also able to see we are working. If sometimes you are struggling, and your work wasn't working and you would be able to talk to them and they would help you think through the process. Like a mentor.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

5.3.2 Relational power and building networks for action

Finding an identity and a sense of belonging is a powerful part of building agency that is transformative. Where community activists have been able to find people who they see as 'following the same path' as them, they have been able to make personal connections and support each other. Where these relationships have grown through a journey of self-discovery and where people have worked together to build an alliance for change in their community, deep bonds are built. These relationships have continued to provide emotional support within and outside of their roles as activists.

'We built very strong relationships, we were like one, we were close to 100 but we were one. Because we know each other. Some of the people who I joined Prevention in Action with, we still have that relationship and the others although they are now doing their own thing we still have that bond... Some of these friendships were there when things were difficult, with the boulders, that is why there are people on some of the rocks. Just telling me that they've walked that road and that they know everything is going to be better. Just being able to talk to them, and them wanting to listen.'
(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

Building relationships and networks has also been significant in how community engagers have sought to renegotiate power dynamics within community structures, where dominant authority is held by older males. A number of community engagers have recognised the importance of working with youth to promote this social change. Where one community engager was invited onto a community leadership committee, she sought to ensure an increased number of seats for young people so that they could collectively become more active in mobilising for change. Community activists highlighted the significance of engaging with formal institutions in order to build the relationships that would support wider mobilisation within the community. The role of community organisations within these networks was also highly valued both in terms of enabling access to services for people facing violence, but also because their formal position and identity within the community was seen as increasing the influence of the collective voice of the network. Community activists spoke of the importance of these networks in rebuilding the social fabric of their community, and enabling a positive political identity for people.

The ongoing commitment built within the community engagers needs to be supported over time in order to maintain motivation for action, and to ensure that there is a long-term strategy for change on reducing violence embedded in the community. Where programme funding and resources have come to an end, activists feel that important inputs into their work, for example training, capacity building and counselling are lacking. There was also a wider reflection from the community activists that it can feel like the community is left behind when NGO projects finish, and that they are not given sufficient official recognition for their work. Within the Prevention in Action initiative it was recognised that to support programme sustainability it was important that there was both citizen and community sector ownership over its implementation. Where these partners have been engaged to incorporate the principles of the Prevention in Action programme into their own approach, the likelihood of continued engagement and action within the community was increased. The importance of working with official structures within the community, for example the ward councillor, schools and street committees, was also highlighted as important for building alliances for continued support for community engagement on the issue of violence reduction and prevention.

5.3.3 Activism as a journey for positive social change

Engaging in social action initiatives is seen as an important pathway for building a personal political identity and strengthening positive social relationships within the community. A large proportion of the community engagers and influencers came from activist backgrounds, or on completing their work with Prevention in Action are now committed to working for the social

development of the community. Their aspirations are to transform their social context and provide hope and opportunity for their neighbours. One community engager spoke of the importance of her experience with Prevention in Action for recognising the rights of different marginalised groups within the community:

'So one of the lessons... was to engage people with regards to gays and lesbians, so that when they see them it doesn't mean that you should just, you know, have this hatred for them or that you must harass them, because they are people, they are also human beings and they also deserve to be loved.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

Through their work on gender violence, community engagers have also concentrated on supporting young people to become active community members as a way of supporting themselves and the community. The significance of this relates to the high levels of unemployment in the youth population and their prevalent involvement within criminal and gang-related activities. Where young people have taken on roles to support the community, for example as home-based carers or working towards a clean environment, they have also become more engaged in community meetings and the development of the community more generally.

By directly participating in this action, people are able to feel ownership of the process of social change, and have an important personal, political commitment to the outcomes. The significance of activists in rebuilding the social strength of the community is reflected in how one of the activists described those people she sees as holding influence and leadership in her area:

'I think I will say, it is the activists, those who are active. It doesn't matter how old you are, or who you are, but if you are active in your community and if you always do things right. Try to organise things like, and do good things in your area, and you are active in everything, I think your voice can be heard. So that is why we say we need to target those strong people like the activists.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

5.3.4 Dignified livelihoods and empowered social development

Community engagers express aspirations for livelihoods with dignity that build hope for their own future, and the future of the community. The journey of engaging in social change initiatives has provided a space for them to recognise their own capabilities and prospects for future work, for example working with the public, and a passion for working towards positive social change. In reference to the community activism, their self-perception is transformed. People can see the change they were working towards and the significance of their work and their role in the community.

'Within this short time in 2010 it is showing that I am just enjoying life, I am independent, being a working mother, being able to provide for my son myself without anyone being else. So I would say this is the best time of my life. This was HIV awareness raising, activities, the people here were supporting me and because I was working then everything was good. I was enjoying my life when I was doing my work, I was gaining confidence that was coming from the workshops. I was really enjoying talking to be people and talking one on one to people. I was engaging in counselling and I was feeling so good about knowing my passion, knowing and growing. It helped me a lot and set the new path that I am taking now, that is where all of this comes from. This is my strength, this where I am going, this is what I am born to do. Because I was always asking myself: What is my own path? I don't know what I am good at, I know people always want to be with me, they always want to be where I am, they are

getting something out of me. I would hear people saying you are this and this, but I don't believe you, and this is when I found this.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

Having the small income that supported this also gave people independence and control over the decisions and influences in their own lives. The pathway of empowerment that community activism enables relates to sustaining agency that has social, political and economic dimensions. This also connects to the importance of empowered livelihoods, and that agency built through activism connects people to their inner aspirations for change, and in turn they are able to connect this to a dignified livelihood strategy.

5.3.5 Building citizenship and action with local identity

Under the right circumstances, community-led initiatives can enable the social relationships and resources necessary for bettering the community, and reducing and mitigating violence. Community engagers worked to engage at the intimate and community levels in the resolution of incidents of violence, using their own knowledge and insights to understand where the underpinning issues lie; one community engager spoke of the intervention she made within a primary school that was excluding children because parents were struggling to pay fees. She understood that the outcome of this for the children involved was high vulnerability to abuse and exploitation within the community and so focused efforts on finding solutions with the parents and teachers involved. She felt that her engagement as a peer, and parent within the community contributed to the openness of the actors involved to engage on the issue.

The resolution of conflict is an important space for community understanding and ownership in relation to transforming discriminatory norms, and engaging in issues where power imbalances can marginalise certain groups and voices. Community engagers and influencers felt strongly that their role in promoting and modelling values of gender equality, inclusion and non-violence was a powerful influence on the behaviour of others. Police interventions would thus accompany a community-led reconciliation process for those involved in the incident of violence. A number of community activists spoke of experiences where police-only interventions had short-lived impacts without support for longer-term change in behaviour. The community activists' own commitment to transforming social norms and renegotiating community relationships in this way, can be interpreted as an expression of their citizenship and aspirations for positive social identity for the community. The engagement of government and non-government actors through this process reflects the importance of working in partnership to support the evolution of the democratic outcomes they are aiming towards.

'We train this group that they must stand for themselves, before you go to the police station, because if this man wants to change or to get help then he must go to the centre. Unless he doesn't want to get help so, he must go to the police station to get help from there. Because what you want from him, is that you don't want for him to be arrested, but you want him to change, in how he feels. Because what we want is we want to change the social norm, we want to change the negative social norm that is what we want to do, what we are trying to do, because the problem is the social norm in our communities. And the environment in the community.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

Community engagers worked to address violence in the wider community by making claims to physical space. Violence-free zones have been established within public spaces to enable members of the community to undertake their daily activities with reduced fear of violence. By increasing the mobility of community members the violence-free zones are supporting people to engage in the public life of the neighbourhood, ultimately supporting livelihood opportunities and the wider development of the community. The notion of 'shared

responsibility' within this process means that community members are also negotiating a process of building social relationships within this public space, and promoting their aspiration for more equal and inclusive relationships, for example by having women and young people involved in the coordination of the process, and also in the patrolling itself. Through this process of reclaiming public space the community members involved were given an opportunity to engage with local political infrastructure on the issue of violence prevention, building wider commitment on the issue from people in leadership positions.

'What they came up with as a community was that they used to have groups of people during the hours when they knew that the most crime happens and crime to people who are maybe going to work early in the morning they would go and patrol the bus stop and declare places like paths and bus stops to be violence-free zones and then everybody would be responsible for making that place a safe place and then even some women in the community came to the and started patrolling just to make the community safer for everyone who is using it.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

5.3.6 Shifts in the responsiveness and accountability of institutions

In explaining their work, community engagers make the case for how a locally networked, responsible and culturally appropriate intervention has the potential to address and mitigate against gender-based violence, and catalyse wider social change through building the structures and relationships that enable citizenship. In relation to this – citizenship identity – community activists placed a lot of emphasis on working with community and public institutions to strengthen their responsiveness and accountability on issues of violence in Khayelitsha.

Transforming discriminatory attitudes that prevent people accessing the support and services necessary to address violence has been an important part of this. Community engagers advocate that people in leadership positions, for example those within street committees, the church, educators, ward councillors, etc. must be engaged with the impact of negative social norms in perpetuating violence in the community. They see this as critical in building their capacity to be able to respond to the issues, and use their influence to inspire action and understanding in the wider community.

The historical lack of effective policing in Khayelitsha was an issue that came up a number of times as contributing to continued violence within the community, and in people's homes. Working to educate the police, change their attitudes and understanding of abuse in order to build a commitment to the prevention of violence, was an important goal in the work of the Prevention in Action activists. They saw their role as helping the police to deliver on their duty to stop violence in the community.

'What makes them change the attitude, because we go to them to the police station, and train them what prevention is all about, we want to educate them, because the abuse is falling under them. They have to work with abuse so we are helping them try to stop violence. So if they want this violence to go away or be better than this they must work with us, we just involve them.'

(Woman, community activist, Khayelitsha)

One community engager explained how they organised for the police to engage with their extended network through multi-stakeholder meetings. In these forums the police engaged with organisations working to prevent and address the abuse of women and children, and different informal community actors such as area committee representatives. She felt that this networked approach initiated a response from the police as they knew they would be held to account for their (in)action. Other community engagers also spoke of an increase in police response where Prevention in Action activists communicated a violent incident; this

was also attributed to their understanding of rights around violence and being able to hold the police accountable.

The importance of service providers engaging with the community on issues of violence from within the community itself was also highlighted. The complex sociopolitical barriers to taking action on violence, and the lack of understanding and information on rights that has been highlighted within Khayelitsha, means that working within the community to raise awareness and provide services is an important part of transformative social action. A number of community engagers spoke of the challenges that community members have in accessing police services and NGO support services on gender violence, and thus the importance of their mediating role. Where the presence of other organisations has been felt, this has provided positive reinforcement of democratic activism against violence, in particular, where programmes have worked with both men and women within the community. The way in which community activists have taken on a leadership role in the Prevention in Action process has also enabled action to be taken in poorly serviced areas of Khayelitsha that may otherwise have been inaccessible to outside organisations or government institutions with which there is a lack of trust.

5.3.7 Conclusions

Within the context of regularised high levels of violence and gender-based discrimination, this evaluation has provided insight into the factors that enable agency to reduce this violence. By using an oral testimony approach that situates the role of activist within the context of a life trajectory, the evaluation has identified some important factors that explain what enables agency and how this relates to the wider issues of citizenship, governance and security in the township.

This evaluation shows some of the factors that can contribute to sustained agency to reduce violence. For activists, the personal costs and risks can be balanced to a certain extent through ongoing support and attention to emotional wellbeing. If this relational aspect is addressed alongside the means for dignified livelihoods, activists can make sustained contributions to social development that contributes to violence reduction. While all these aspects are not within the purview of one particular programme or policy, if there are significant gaps it is likely to undermine the potential for agency that builds citizenship and responsive governance.

The testimonies of activists show how they accumulate relational power through networks for action that connect them to other committed individuals within and outside their township. The importance of these wider networks for sustaining activism is well researched in other contexts of urban violence (Pereira 2007). Sustained activism connected to wider networks can in turn support a process of constructing citizen action that is grounded in local identity. That is, citizen action against violence that is informed by the local context, its constraints and possibilities is more sustainable and will have greater impact when combined with external interventions that address wider systemic issues. Shifts in the responsiveness and accountability of institutions responsible for addressing violence and its underlying causes require locally relevant and sustained citizen action. The testimonies of the activists in this pilot provide insight into how this can happen.

In conclusion, the testimonies collected through this pilot point to the importance of understanding activism as a journey for which there is not a proscribed path or set of steps. The lives of individual activists are as complex as the situations in which they live and work. And yet, this pilot has identified some important trends and patterns within these life trajectories. Policy and programme interventions aimed at reducing violence, and particularly gender-based violence, need to give greater attention to what enables, sustains, and inhibits activism outside of the boundaries of particular projects. In the long term, the contributions that these activists can make to greater security can be substantial.

6 Policy and practice recommendations

The activist perspectives presented in this evaluation pilot have important implications for effective policy and practice in mitigating gender violence and other forms of violence in urban contexts.

As noted in our review of the policy context, there are already a substantial number of national, provincial and city level initiatives aimed at preventing and mitigating violence, including gender-based violence specifically. For instance, the *National Crime Prevention Strategy* for South Africa includes as one of its four pillars: community values and education to ensure community awareness and involvement in crime prevention actions (Mpumalanga Provincial Government 2014). What is clear from the analysis above is that more can be done than educating the public, and that policy should emphasise and enable citizen-led action and activism based on democratic rights and responsibilities. Community-level activists, networks and organisations can be important agents to address discriminatory social norms, issues of social cohesion and exclusion, and build constructive state–society relations. This is all undervalued in the current policy frame.

In terms of gender-based violence, there are a vast array of innovative preventive strategies and initiatives emerging across the country, covering many of the ‘arenas for action’ for ending gender-based violence in South Africa’s *National Action Plan*. However, there are also gaps in coverage overall as well as within given arenas. Gaps include: the emphasis on short-term over long-term goals; and the need for more effective linkages, as well as for sustained sources of funding to scale up prevention initiatives. Efforts remain fragmented and are not adequately funded. Monitoring and evaluation is similarly sporadic, with the result that initiatives on the ground appear to be making little headway overall, despite some excellent localised initiatives and impact.

On paper, the recently launched Integrated Provincial Violence Prevention Policy Framework of the Western Cape Government is better in taking a more holistic approach to the causes of violence, integrating short- and long-term goals and addressing the centrality of changing social norms. Perhaps though, the general public health approach needs to be more explicitly linked to the citizens claiming rights, both individually and collectively, to better recognise and support the role of local activism in the fight against gender-based violence.

While the City of Cape Town’s Integrated Development Plan for 2012–2017 affirms a role for *community involvement in crime prevention* (City of Cape Town 2012), however, there is relative underdevelopment in coordinated strategies. In addition, there is almost no mention of violence in this strategy, apart from the flagship Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) programme, and no specific mentions of domestic violence or gender-based violence. If at the national and provincial level, policy needs some further adjustment, at the local level it needs more substantial development.

Lastly, community-based strategies such as CeaseFire violence prevention, neighbourhood watch, local and neighbourhood safety officers, school resource officers, and community policing forums were not mentioned by any of the respondents in our pilot. Neither did they mention any of the national, provincial or local initiatives either (in this regard though, it should be noted that the Khayelitsha Thuthuzela Care Centre is still to be completed). This silence is interesting given our wide-ranging conversations that explored background motivations for activism that revealed the importance of some organisations like the Treatment Action Campaign. In terms of community policing forums, which exist nationwide, the issue in Khayelitsha may be one of scale, as the forums are linked to police stations, and in Khayelitsha there are just three police stations for a population of over 400,000 people.

6.1 Policy and practice recommendations

There are gaps in policy around community involvement in the development and implementation of violence prevention, including gender-based violence prevention, which need attention.

- At national and provincial level policy development gaps are mostly about linking the role of the community in violence prevention to the claiming of democratic rights and responsibilities by citizens individually and collectively. In this way the current role assigned to the community in violence prevention and mitigation as either populations to be educated, sources of information, or individuals who should take more responsibility for themselves, can be rethought as potential partners who can contribute independently to the common project of building safer communities.
- At city level, policy around violence prevention seems limited to one project, the VPUU, which reaches a small number of people. More thought on how to broaden this out to citizens, and how to better link with provincial and national strategies to achieve this is crucial. It also appears that even less thought has been given to how to combat gender-based violence at the level of the city.
- However strong policy is on paper, it is meaningless if not implemented, or implemented in a limited way. Our findings suggest a clear lack of understanding of the many programmes that exist on paper but are perhaps not reaching as many people as they should. The literature suggests a number of potential reasons: a lack of coordination amongst government agencies, a lack of resources, and underperformance by government departments.

The research shows some useful recommendations on how policy and programming can strengthen the role of the community as citizens in violence prevention and the potential for democratic outcomes.

6.1.1 Recommendations for locally relevant and responsive policy and practice

- It is important that policies addressing violence prevention and mitigation link between local, provincial and national levels. Learning needs to take place between each level to ensure that policies are responsive to the grassroots reality of how positive change happens in contexts of urban violence, and that national policy supports this.
- Diverse stakeholders need to be engaged in networks working to prevent and reduce gender-based violence, including residents, state partners, informal institutions and civil society in order to support system-wide shifts. This process involves opening up both informal and formal opportunities for dialogue to support different actors to work together for change.
- Working with citizens' own understanding of their context through community engagement strategies, will help ensure that interventions to address violence engage with and challenge the sociocultural and power dynamics that may impede their uptake. This is important for restoring inclusive relationships within communities where violent realities have eroded trust and isolated individuals, restricting opportunities for citizenship. Working with men and boys as well as women as part of the solution to gender-based violence will significantly contribute to transformative social change.
- Engage within the community to implement services that respond to the context of violence where it happens; this involves increasing visibility of services and understanding the social and cultural dimensions. The importance of working with local infrastructure and organisations is key; where these actors are able to have ownership over the implementation of the programme there is greater potential for

democratic structures and longer term change. This is also relevant to the way research on violence mitigation is approached.

6.1.2 Recommendations for enabling and sustaining citizen agency and action

- Enabling space and time for relationships is critical. Interpersonal relationships are integral to building personal strength to take action, and the mobilisation of activist networks can help build alliances for change within the wider community.
- Interventions need to include learning and skills-building with official recognition, in order to enhance sustainable livelihoods and employment opportunities. This includes formal recognition of the experiences and skills of activists, and the work they are doing.
- Recognise emotion as a critical influence in the process of social change, in the context of gender-based violence. Personal connections and empathy provide an important catalyst for action, and emotional support and consideration of personal, social and material wellbeing can help ensure that action and activism is sustained.

These recommendations are of particular relevance to the role of the police as a state institution. Police responsiveness and accountability on issues of violence within intimate, community and institutional spaces are critical for rebuilding trusting relationships with citizens and in catalysing wider citizen action. Activists emphasised the importance of full cooperation from the police, including more transparency on the status of particular cases of violence, and increased responsiveness of the police to gender-based violence.

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Brighton BN1 9RE

T +44 (0)1273 606261

F +44 (0)1273 621202

E ids@ids.ac.uk

www.ids.ac.uk

