



SAFER PLACES:  
RESILIENT INSTITUTIONS AND  
NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

# SPRINT

## EMBEDDING AREA-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS (ABVPI) IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Considering safety issues when working in and on informal settlements goes to the heart of building sustainable human settlements, where all residents enjoy a good quality of life. <sup>1</sup> This advocacy brief assesses how the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) in the National Housing Code is interpreted and implemented to identify practical examples, barriers and/or opportunities to integrate ABVPI into informal settlement upgrading. It is aimed at providing key information and recommendations to local government to shift their approach toward VPIs and for provincial and national government, who guide municipalities and contract service providers, to provide an enabling environment for this shift to take place.



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# PREFACE

The task of building safer and resilient communities in South Africa is a complex and challenging one. Severe inequality, high levels of youth unemployment, abuse of alcohol and drugs, rapid urbanisation and poor health and education outcomes all contribute to an environment of risk and vulnerability to crime and violence. Violence and crime stem from a complex web of risk factors. South Africa has developed a progressive and enabling policy framework for prevention as articulated across the Constitution, the White Paper for Safety and Security (WPSS), the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) and the recent National Strategic Plan for Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP GBVF). Despite this, violence prevention is not systematically and holistically prioritised and criminal justice-focused responses are still predominant.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on many communities in South Africa. Consequently, social cohesion is even more at risk, which might amplify risk factors for increased violence and crime. The pandemic has exacerbated already extremely high rates of crime and violence endemic in vulnerable communities and it is clear that inequality affects availability, access and quality of services.

The Safer Places: Resilient Institutions and Neighbourhoods Together (SPRINT) Project is a joint initiative of the South African German Development Cooperation with the support of the GIZ - Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Programme, implemented by Isandla Institute and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU NPC). The initiative was initially conceptualised in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the aim to assist communities across the country to build resilience in a context of precarious social cohesion and risk factors for increased violence and crime.<sup>3</sup>

Isandla Institute would like to thank Kate Tissington for her contributions to an earlier version of this document.

**The SPRINT Project has two distinct, but inter-related, pathways to achieve this:**

- A Learning Network, which consists of a civil society organisations (CSOs) from a cross-section of sectors, and creates opportunities for peer exchanges resulting in learning and advocacy documentation.
- A Laboratory, which involves capacity-building processes with participating municipalities and local CSOs, and focuses on co-designing and implementing practical, area-based solutions to violence-related challenges.

Through these interventions, the SPRINT Project works towards the long-term vision of effective area-based VPI (ABVPI) integrated into the development and management of vulnerable urban communities, including informal settlements.

**Three critical areas of advocacy have been identified:**

- 01** Embedding ABVPI in informal settlement upgrading
- 02** Resourcing for ABVPI
- 03** Activation as a key entry point for creating sustainable and inclusive safe places

This output speaks to the first topic, "Embedding Area-Based Violence Prevention Interventions (ABVPI) in Informal Settlement Upgrading".

# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

**The COVID-19 pandemic has had – and continues to have - considerable emotional, psychological, social and economic impacts on people and has placed pressure on already strained services, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable in society.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that inequality affects availability, access and quality of services, including clinics and good quality water, sanitation and hygiene systems. The pandemic has also exacerbated already extremely high rates of crime and violence endemic in vulnerable communities.<sup>5</sup>**

**The following interrelated risk factors underpinning violence and crime have emerged as a result of COVID-19:**

- joblessness, unemployment, loss of income, job insecurity;
- hunger and food insecurity;
- gender-based violence, violence against children, sexual violence and abuse of children;
- increase in crime;
- youth dropping out of school and youth vulnerability to gangsterism;
- increased inequality and reduced social cohesion;
- increased police brutality and clearing of occupied land;
- stress, uncertainty, anxiety and mental health challenges.<sup>6</sup>

Other stressors include frustration over inadequate access to services during lockdown, increased pressure in terms of childcare and looking after ill family members.<sup>7</sup>

The response by government has unfortunately often been a securitised and militarised one, with police and the army in neighbourhoods arresting people infringing the regulations, or to create temporary solutions, such as the rollout of water tanks, special relief grants and distribution of food parcels. To curtail the epidemic in informal settlements, other than providing temporary basic services, government also initially proposed a 'de-densification' strategy, i.e. a construction of temporary relocation areas for particular vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and people with disabilities.

The past twenty years have seen roughly a **10-fold increase** in the number of informal settlements (from 300 in 2002 to an estimated 3,200 in May 2020). Informal settlements provide an estimated **5 million** people in South Africa with a place to live.

Risk factors to violence are more prevalent in under-resourced and under-developed areas like informal settlements. COVID-19 has **aggravated** those risk factors – loss of income and work, debt, food insecurity, school dropout, etc. COVID-19 has deepened **housing insecurity** and poverty, contributing to the rapid growth of informal settlements. For example, in the Western Cape (mostly in Cape Town), over 1,000 attempted **land invasions** were recorded between July 2020 and February 2021.

However, opposition from civil society groups<sup>8</sup> and implementation challenges led to this approach being abandoned.<sup>9</sup>

However, these are short-term, reactive approaches and more sustainable medium- and long-term approaches are clearly required. Practice and evidence built up over the years has demonstrated that integrated area-based violence and crime prevention strategies coordinated by a municipality can limit the incidence of crime and violence.<sup>10</sup> There has been a clear need identified to shift from a focus on rapid emergency responses to deep engagement and solidarity building in the most vulnerable areas, which are often informal settlements. Informal settlements are areas that do not comply with planning norms and standards, occupied often by poor households who have moved onto land informally for a range of reasons, in a context of severe housing backlogs.

<sup>4</sup> SPRINT (2020) Learning Brief 1: The impact of COVID-19 on safety, wellbeing, and vulnerability to crime and violence, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> SPRINT (2020) Learning Brief 1: The impact of COVID-19 on safety, wellbeing, and vulnerability to crime and violence, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> In April 2020, civil society organisations from across the country wrote a letter to the national Department of Human Settlements expressing concern about the 'de-densification' approach. This resulted in a series of engagements between the signatories and the Minister and the Department, which culminated in the Partnership Framework Agreement between Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) around interventions in informal settlements in the context of COVID-19 [8 June 2020].

<sup>9</sup> In August 2020, the Premier of Limpopo faced embarrassment when formally handing over 40 temporary shelters valued at R2.4million constructed under the national Department of Human Settlement's de-densification drive [https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/temporary-tin-shelters-limpopo-premier-blames-human-settlements-department-20200806].

<sup>10</sup> SPRINT Brochure (2020) p. 4.

<sup>1</sup> African Centre for Cities (ACC), Isandla Institute, Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) and GIZ-VCP (2017) Promoting Safety and Violence Prevention Through Informal Settlement Upgrading: Lessons from Different Informal Settlement Interventions for Practitioners and Policy Makers, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> SPRINT Brochure (2020) p.1

<sup>3</sup> Knowledge Management across the Field of Violence Prevention within the South African-German Development Cooperation; National Treasury, BMZ (2020) developed a series of booklets aimed at sharing the collective knowledge about violence prevention to facilitate the institutionalisation, upscaling, adaptation of, and fostering of synergies amongst, successful violence prevention approaches.

Violence prevention work addresses the risk factors contributing to violence, focusing less on security and symptoms and more on safety and creating a society that serves to address the causes of violence.<sup>11</sup> **Security** is protection against a known or perceived threat, while **safety** is living without that threat or fear. Violence prevention “seeks to increase the presence of protective factors – such as a caring family, a safe and nurturing school environment, a sense of belonging and access to adequate social services – which promote resilience to risk factors.”<sup>12</sup> Area-based violence prevention interventions (ABVPI) take on “a specific geographic area within which to achieve this complexity, by merging social, spatial and institutional approaches over a foundation of robust community participation and effective knowledge management” and in which all spheres of government, departments and sectors come together to focus on lived realities and place-making in a defined spatial context.<sup>13</sup> ABVPI are implemented at a smaller scale, below the district or municipal level, most commonly at the precinct, neighbourhood or street level.<sup>14</sup> The approach is particularly useful for areas where there is a high concentration of needs, as is the case with informal settlements in South Africa.<sup>15</sup>

As a result of Covid-19 there has been a push for rapidly scaling up informal settlement upgrading in South Africa. A Partnership Framework Agreement between civil society organisations (CSOs) and the Department of Human Settlements (DHS) around interventions in informal settlements in the context of Covid-19 was developed in 2020. The Agreement seeks to strengthen partnerships in informal settlement upgrading more generally. It highlights the 1.2 million vulnerable households residing within more than 2 700 informal settlements across the country who are acutely at risk as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>16</sup>

The pandemic “has starkly exposed the severity of living conditions in informal settlements, which have always threatened the health, dignity and safety of people living there. The implications of these living conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic present an imminent life and death situation.”<sup>17</sup>

The Partnership Framework Agreement identifies the following factors that create an environment of risk and susceptibility for

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines **violence** as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” (WHO. 2002)

**Violence prevention** is an action, or a series of actions that are undertaken to prevent violence. There are 3 stages of violence prevention:

- 01 Primary violence prevention** seeks to address risk factors known to be associated with violence.
- 02 Secondary violence prevention** are efforts to intervene among populations, who are already at high risk, to ensure that violence does not occur.
- 03 Tertiary violence prevention** focuses on providing long term care after acts of violence have occurred and efforts to prevent relapses by offenders. (Saferspaces. 2020)

informal settlements in the context of COVID-19: lack of access to basic services, adequate shelter, economic activity, education and information sharing, and social safety nets.<sup>18</sup> It’s focus is not only on addressing the immediate needs to protect people in informal settlements from the health implications of the pandemic, but on addressing the underlying factors that create an environment of risk to infection and the longer term implications of the pandemic on informal settlements. The focus on safety and wellbeing, building partnerships and

UN-Habitat defines informal settlements as residential areas where 1) inhabitants have no security of tenure vis-à-vis the land or dwellings they inhabit, with modalities ranging from squatting to informal rental housing, 2) the neighbourhoods usually lack, or are cut off from basic services and city infrastructure and 3) the housing may not comply with current planning and building regulations and is often situated in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas.

**Informal settlement upgrading refers to an integrated approach to improve the physical, social, economic and environmental conditions of an informal settlement and to address the deprivations mentioned in the UN-Habitat definition above.**

citizen engagement forms part of both the principles and practice of ABVPI and in situ informal settlement upgrading. This will be discussed later in this advocacy brief. It is useful, however, to first set out some international and local policy in order to situate how issues of crime prevention are embedded, with a focus on the local government role. The advocacy brief will then move to a discussion of lessons from practice.

11 GIZ-VCP and VPUU NPC (2020) Guide to Designing Integrated Violence Prevention Interventions: Sharing Knowledge, p. 17.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 These figures are based on Census 2011 data and the Informal Settlements Database and this information is no doubt quite outdated.

17 Partnership Framework Agreement between Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) around interventions in informal settlements in the context of COVID-19 [8 June 2020].

18 Ibid

# REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY AND LEGISLATION

This section briefly sets out the relevant international and local policy context for safe urban settlements and violence prevention (ABVPI) and highlights the imperative to embed VPI in urban planning and development, and specifically informal settlement upgrading (ISU). The section then focuses on specific programmes or policy instruments for upgrading informal settlements and engages with issues of alignment between UISP and VPI at the level of principles and approach. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) all speak to issues of violence prevention and informal settlement upgrading, as do sector specific policies and guidelines and laws and regulations at the local level.

## VIOLENCE AND CRIME PREVENTION

SDG 11 calls for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. This is a clear goal that emphasises safety in cities and human settlements. The UN SDG 16.1 calls for significant reduction in all forms of violence everywhere.

The NDP details a vision of 2030 in which “people living in South Africa feel safe and have no fear of crime”, prioritising integrated approaches and community participation in community safety. The NDP recognises that safety and security are “directly related to socio-economic development and equality,” and require an environment “conducive to employment creation, improved educational and health outcomes, and strengthened social cohesion”. It argues further, “safety involves the criminal justice system, local government, community, and private sector and role players involved in economic and social development”.<sup>19</sup>

The vision of the IUDF is: “liveable, safe, resource-efficient cities and towns that are socially integrated, economically inclusive and globally competitive, where residents actively participate in urban life”.<sup>20</sup>

The White Paper on Safety and Security (2016) presents a government-wide integrated approach and policy framework to address crime and violence over the medium-term. It promotes developmental, collaborative, knowledge-based and participative approaches to planning and implementation for safety and violence and crime prevention interventions.

There are six key inter-related and interdependent thematic interventions that collectively facilitate the outcome of safer communities.<sup>21</sup> The implementation of these interventions is supported by system requirements (system outcomes), broadly

defined as alignment, budgeting and implementation mechanisms that need to be fulfilled in order to implement the six key pillars or themes, which are:

- 01** An effective criminal justice system;
- 02** Early intervention to prevent crime and violence and promote safety;
- 03** Victim support;
- 04** Effective and integrated service delivery for safety, security and prevention of violence;
- 05** Safety through environmental design; and
- 06** Active public and community participation.

In 2020/21 The Civilian Secretariat for Police Service (CSPS) developed the Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy (ICVPS) which gives effect to the implementation of the White Paper on Safety and Security. The Strategy provides a coordinated and integrated plan to prevent crime and violence in South Africa, “which is a necessary precondition for increasing people’s feeling of safety and building safer communities”.<sup>22</sup> The Strategy acknowledges the need for complementary interventions to address the drivers of crime: socio economic factors including poverty, inequality, unemployment, social welfare, health and education. The ICVPS advocates a collective and collaborative relationship between government and non-government actors in promoting safety and addresses all relevant stakeholders within the three spheres of government, community, civil society and the private sector, placing emphasis on the role of local government in planning for and implementing safety programmes. The thematic areas or pillars are aligned with those outlined in the White Paper.<sup>23</sup>

19 National Planning Commission (NPC), National Development Plan (2012), p. 405.

20 COGTA, Integrated Urban Development Framework (2016), p. 38.

21 GIZ-VCP and VPUU NPC (eds.) (2020) Violence Prevention Case Studies, p. 18.

22 See <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/resources/entry/draft-integrated-crime-and-violence-prevention-strategy>.

23 Civilian Secretariat for Police Service (2020) Draft Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy. The Strategy has been submitted for Cabinet approval.

## INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

As mentioned before, SDG 11 calls for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. It includes targets to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums by 2030. SDG 11 emphasises the need to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management. The NDP outlines the following five human settlements objectives to be achieved:

- A strong and efficient spatial planning system, well integrated across the spheres of government;
- Upgrading of all informal settlements on suitable, well located land;
- More people living closer to their places of work;
- Better quality public transport; and
- More jobs in or close to dense, urban townships.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of informal settlements, the NDP has a target to upgrade all informal settlements on suitable, well located land by 2030. The NDP highlights the need for experimentation and initiative and expresses concern at the slow pace of implementation and frequent use of conventional approaches.

The IUDF provides a roadmap to implement the NDP vision for spatial transformation, focusing on the transformation of South African cities and towns. The vision of the IUDF is: “liveable, safe, resource-efficient cities and towns that are socially integrated, economically inclusive and globally competitive, where residents actively participate in urban life”.<sup>25</sup> The IUDF emphasises safety and inclusion in towns and cities, as well as the participation of communities. The IUDF incorporates four strategic goals:

- To ensure people have access to social and economic services, opportunities and choices (**inclusion and access**);
- To harness urban dynamism for inclusive, sustainable economic growth and development (**growth**);
- To enhance the capacity of the state and its citizens to work together to achieve social integration (**governance**); and
- To forge new spatial forms in settlement, transport, social and economic areas (**spatial integration**).<sup>26</sup>

The IUDF also recognises safety as a basic human right, a public good, and a necessary condition for realising spatial transformation. It includes urban safety, particularly safety in public spaces as essential ingredients for creating liveable and prosperous cities.

The IUDF mandates that municipalities involve communities in implementation and monitoring of projects. It also calls on Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and NDHS to facilitate social compacts for the upgrading of priority informal settlements. In terms of legislation, the 2016 Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) refers to incremental upgrading of informal areas, which it defines as the progressive introduction of administration, management, engineering services and land tenure rights to an area that is established outside existing planning legislation, and may include any settlement or area under traditional tenure. According to SPLUMA, municipalities must include provisions that permit the incremental introduction of land use management and regulation in informal settlements and slums.

The Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) contained in the National Housing Code (2009) forms the basis for informal settlement upgrading interventions in South Africa and focuses on providing secure tenure, access to basic services, social and economic amenities to people residing in informal settlements. The approach undertaken is meant to be incremental, inclusive and participatory. Municipalities are expected to upgrade informal settlements in situ in line with the UISP wherever possible.<sup>27</sup> The UISP is a priority programme and sets out an incremental, four-phase approach to upgrading informal settlements. Phase 1 is the **application** phase, Phase 2 is the **project initiation** phase and Phase 3 is **project implementation**, with this phased approach focused on community participation, supply of basic services and tenure security. In the UISP, Phase 4 is focused on **housing consolidation**.

Importantly, the NDHS has effectively delinked Phases 1-3 from the Phase 4 housing consolidation phase by directing provinces and municipalities to prioritise upgrading towards Phase 3. What is called Phase 4 is therefore not really a phase of the UISP but it is an additional phase where houses are built and title deeds are provided for those people who qualify for a housing subsidy once they have been through the previous phases.<sup>28</sup> The UISP and related subsidy funds land purchase and basic services, with housing top structures intended to be funded through the Expanded People’s Housing Programme (EPHP) or other self-build housing programmes.

In 2019/2020, the structure of the Human Settlements Development Grant (HSDG) and the Urban Settlements Development Grant

(USDG) were changed “to intensify efforts to upgrade informal settlements in partnership with communities”.<sup>29</sup> To promote this objective, a new component was introduced with specific conditions relating to upgrading. This component remained in place in 2020/2021, serving as a planning and preparatory platform for the introduction of a new standalone Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant (ISUPG), which was implemented in 2021/2022.

This conditional allocation made to provinces and metropolitan municipalities is specifically designed to provide funding to facilitate a programmatic and inclusive approach to upgrading informal settlements. The ISUPG to metros in particular is designed to ensure a municipality-wide approach to upgrading informal settlements. According to the 2021 Division of Revenue Bill, “upgrading informal settlements remains a priority over the medium term”, with upgrading described as “an inclusive process through which informal residential areas are incrementally improved, formalised and incorporated into the city or neighbourhood by extending land tenure security, infrastructure and services to residents of informal settlements”.<sup>30</sup>

Importantly, municipalities must submit an Informal Settlement Upgrading Plan for each settlement to be upgraded, prepared in terms of National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP),<sup>34</sup> which must include the following: project description, settlement name and GIS coordinates, project institutional arrangements, sustainable livelihood implementation plan, outputs and targets for services to be delivered, cash flow projections (payment schedule), details of support plan, risk management plan and prioritisation certificate.<sup>35</sup>

There is currently a policy and legislative review being undertaken by the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) on behalf of the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation. The UISP is also being reviewed as part of this, which may result in changes in approaches, instruments and requirements for informal settlement upgrading. It appears, however, that the key underpinnings of the Programme will remain and that the UISP will be particularly emphasised as a key intervention by the NDHS in line with the new grant structure.

### Outputs that should be funded from the ISUPG include:

- A programmatic municipality-wide informal settlements upgrading strategy;<sup>31</sup>
- Informal settlements upgrading plans;<sup>32</sup>
- Sustainable Livelihoods Plans;
- Social compacts or agreements concluded with communities outlining their role in the upgrading process;<sup>33</sup>
- Households provided with secure tenure and individual municipal engineering services (water services, sanitation solutions and electricity – grid and non-grid);
- Informal settlements provided with interim and permanent municipal engineering services (public lighting, roads, storm water, refuse removal and bulk connections for water, sanitation and electricity);
- Hectares of land acquired for relocation;
- Hectares of land acquired for in situ upgrading; and,
- In situ individually serviced sites.

24 See <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/resources/entry/draft-integrated-crime-and-violence-prevention-strategy>

25 Civilian Secretariat for Police Service (2020) Draft Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy.

26 The IUDF outlines eight policy levers: integrated spatial planning; integrated transport and mobility; integrated and sustainable human settlements; integrated urban infrastructure; efficient land governance and management; inclusive economic development; empowered active communities; and, effective urban governance.

27 Melani and the Further Residents of Slovo Park Informal Settlement v City of Johannesburg and Others 2016 (5) SA 67 (GJ) [22 March 2016]. See <http://www.seri-sa.org/index.php/more-news/19-litigation/case-entries/225-melani-and-the-further-residents-of-slovo-park-informal-settlement-v-city-of-johannesburg-and-others-slovo-park>

28 See <https://afesis.org.za/upgrading-informal-settlements/>

29 Division of Revenue Bill (2021), p. 89.

30 Ibid, p. 103.

31 Municipalities must prepare a municipality-wide Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy that sets out the City’s approach to informal settlement upgrading and how settlements are categorised and will be prioritised for upgrading. A draft of this plan must be submitted to DHS by 29 October 2021. DORA, p. 226.

32 Draft Informal Settlement Upgrading Plans for each settlement to be upgraded in 2022/2023 must be submitted to the NDHS by 28 January 2022. Division of Revenue Bill (2021), p. 226.

33 A social compact or any other community participation agreement must be concluded as part of each individual informal settlement upgrading plan. A maximum of three per cent of the project cost may be used for community/ social facilitation. Division of Revenue Bill (2021), p. 227.

34 NUSP was created by the NDHS to provide support, capacity and assistance to provinces and municipalities around upgrading informal settlements in terms of the UISP. NUSP is located with the department and works closely with the Housing Development Agency (HDA) to fast-track incremental in situ upgrading in the country.

35 Division of Revenue Bill (2021), p. 226.

# UNPACKING VIOLENCE, CRIME PREVENTION PRINCIPLES & APPROACHES

This section focuses on violence and crime prevention, with the underpinning principles and approaches highlighted in order to contribute to a discussion on the implications for informal settlements and how these are aligned with the UISP. There is no single reason that explains why people become violent or engage in criminal activity; however social research has shown that violent behaviour in people is influenced by a complex interaction of many factors.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) uses the **ecological model** to explain the complex phenomenon of violent behaviour. The ecological model highlights the multiple causes of violence and the interaction of risk factors operating within the family and broader community, social, cultural and economic contexts.<sup>36</sup> These present certain risk and protective factors, producing mutually reinforcing factors of influence over an individual, and providing a helpful lens for the planning of violence prevention measures. Risk factors are characteristics, variables, or hazards that, if present for a given individual, make it more likely that they, rather than someone selected from the general population, will develop a tendency towards certain behaviour, such as violence. At the other end of the spectrum, protective factors are those factors that mediate or moderate the effect of exposure to risk factors, resulting in reduced incidence of problem behaviour.<sup>37</sup>

The ecological model highlights the importance of the co-ordinated action required on multiple levels in order to prevent violence. Violence prevention broadly includes the following: **situational violence prevention** (which refers to altering the environment using principles of crime prevention through environmental design); **social violence prevention** (which is about early interventions, including early childhood development, opportunities for youth and building the social capital of communities) and **institutional violence prevention** (which includes embedding violence prevention in governance and urban management and building the capacities of community structures).<sup>38</sup>

In 2020 a guide on designing integrated VPIs was produced and included the following themes: sharing knowledge, fostering active citizenry, co-designing integration building relationships, managing external risks, and integrating budgets.<sup>39</sup> The guide is process-oriented and was informed by experiential knowledge and the stories of practitioners and government officials within the South African-German Development Cooperation during the past decade. In terms of its focus on process,<sup>40</sup> it dovetails extremely well with the process orientated, inclusive and participatory approach

envisaged by informal settlement upgrading. There are many insights that can be drawn from one into the other. Key insights are that VPIs are most effective when embedded in local plans and policies, such as Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and Informal Settlement Upgrading Plans and when they are anchored in strong local networks where social capital is promoted. This echoes the goals and principles of the UISP, and particularly the emphasis on developing social compacts in the ISUPG. The guide stresses the importance of the collaborative development of context-specific plans, through meaningful engagement with residents, businesses and public sector actors, as part of VPIs.<sup>41</sup>

This people-centred collaborative approach forms the core of the UISP, which also has as its goals to build partnerships and build safe communities. Violence and crime prevention work views at the core of integration a dedication to working together as a set of diverse people, groups or functions to achieve a common goal. This cannot happen without relationships between all actors involved. Strong relationships foster greater ownership among the different members of integrated teams working in violence prevention. They make it easier to work efficiently, effectively and, at their best, in synchrony. However, despite their deep importance to violence prevention, the processes of building, defining and maintaining relationships across many different ways of working and thinking can be challenging.<sup>42</sup>

These are the challenges that have affected the implementation of in situ upgrading projects the country.

**Violence prevention knowledge and learning has identified the following aspects of building relationships:**

- Solidifying a foundation of trust to foster more effective integration;
- Dealing with role clarification and power dynamics in partnerships;
- Strengthening partnerships through intergovernmental mechanisms and spaces of collaboration; and,
- Sustaining relationships over the long term.<sup>43</sup>

Also important is the livelihoods approach that municipalities are expected to embed in their informal settlement upgrading plans, as per the ISUPG, which has an important role to play in supporting livelihood strategies and promoting job opportunities and economic activities at the settlement level.

## ALIGNMENT BETWEEN ABVPI AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

**There is significant alignment between the principles and approaches of ABVPI and of informal settlement upgrading, as per the UISP. These include:**

- **Embedded in local plans and strategies:** Neither ABVPI nor informal settlement upgrading should be seen as ad hoc projects, but need to be part of a strategic and programmatic approach.
- **Anchored in local networks:** Local stakeholders are critical to the appropriate design and implementation of interventions; a sense of ownership of the initiative is critical to its acceptability and sustainability.
- **Co-creation and collaboration:** Residents and their organisations have vital local knowledge, expertise and networks that can result in better, more locally suitable and empowering initiatives. In informal settlement upgrading projects, this takes the form of a social compact between the municipality and community actors.
- **People-centred:** The intention is to create solutions that bring about lasting change in people's lives. At the heart of both ABVPI and informal settlement upgrading are therefore approaches that are people-centred.
- **Partnerships:** The multi-faceted nature of ABVPI and informal settlement upgrading is best pursued by bringing together multiple stakeholders (government, civil society, private sector) to work together towards a common goal.

- **Vision- / goal-focused:** ABVPI and informal settlement upgrading are not about a discrete set of (once-off) interventions, but about incremental change towards a vision for the neighbourhood – one that is safe, liveable, dignified, economically vibrant, socially cohesive and sustainable.
- **Livelihoods matter:** Poverty, hunger, unemployment and job dissatisfaction contribute to an environment of risk to crime and violence; ABVPI therefore often incorporates aspects that address this reality. In recognition of the importance of socio-economic well-being, informal settlement upgrading plans need to incorporate a Sustainable Livelihoods Plan.
- **Addressing vulnerability and exclusion:** Communities are not homogeneous nor necessarily egalitarian. Specific vulnerability and exclusion on the basis of gender, age, sexual identity or nationality for example, needs to be understood and proactively addressed.
- **Infrastructure + public space + activation:** Effective responses, whether to risk factors that contribute to crime and violence or to locational poverty and marginalisation, require a combination of interventions, including infrastructure (including bulk infrastructure, but also social and economic infrastructure), public space and urban design, as well as activation programmes to give life to spaces and facilities.
- **Settlement-level outcomes:** Both ABVPI and informal settlement upgrading are concerned with interventions that improve the quality of the neighbourhood.

<sup>36</sup> See <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/understand/entry/how-can-we-prevent-violence>

<sup>37</sup> See <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/understand/entry/how-can-we-prevent-violence>

<sup>38</sup> GIZ-VCP and VPUU NPC (2020) Guide to Designing Integrated Violence Prevention Interventions: Building Relationships, p. 17.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> GIZ-VCP and VPUU NPC (2020) Guide to Designing Integrated Violence Prevention Interventions: Managing External Risks, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> GIZ-VCP and VPUU NPC (2020) Guide to Designing Integrated Violence Prevention Interventions: Building Relationships, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> GIZ-VCP and VPUU NPC (2020) Guide to Designing Integrated Violence Prevention Interventions: Building Relationships, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

# LESSONS FROM PRACTICE IN VPI AND ISU

This section focuses on lessons from practice in ISU. There are a number of barriers and opportunities that come with understanding and embedding VPI in the context of informal settlement upgrading. The aim of this section is to highlight alignment between VPI and ISU and how a VPI approach can give further impetus to a more comprehensive framing of ISU beyond sites and service to building safe, resilient, well-resourced communities.

There has been relatively slow uptake of the UISP and difficulties of truly assessing municipalities' performance and progress, and – critically – the risk (borne out from practice to date) that municipalities push for serviced sites to meet their share of delivery targets, rather than upgrading that seeks to bring about settlement level outcomes. The 2019-2024 Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) has a priority around Spatial Integration, Human Settlements and Local Government which states that "South Africa needs coordinated spatial planning systems that transform human settlements into equitable and efficient spaces, with citizens living in close proximity to work, social facilities and the necessary infrastructure." To this end the MTSF has an intervention around upgrading informal settlements to Phase 3 using the ISUPG, providing a new indicator and target of 1 500 informal settlements to be formalised/upgraded to Phase 3 of the UISP.<sup>44</sup> According to the MTSF 1 500 informal settlements identified for upgrading will be spatially referenced and mapped by 2024 with community compact partnerships.<sup>45</sup> The shift in the current MTSF to measuring progress at the settlement-level rather than the number of households upgraded is important.

NGOs and community groups recently welcomed the financial allocation for informal settlement upgrading over the coming years; however, they have emphasised that NDHS needs to support municipalities to accelerate delivery and focus on the intent of the UISP and ensure that a key focus is on improving the overall quality of neighbourhoods in which informal settlements are located.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, implementation of the UISP to date has been extremely uneven, with informal settlements residents often only provided with shared, temporary services as a once-off. In some metros and provinces there has been very poor delivery, while in other places the numbers of households upgraded has looked impressive on paper, however the reality is that these households have not been part of participatory, incremental upgrading projects, but rather simply provided with shared services.

It has been unclear in many cases how exactly provinces and metros have been measuring delivery of individual and shared services in upgraded informal settlements; what tenure security has been provided; what levels of service have been provided and what the medium and long-term plans for the settlements are in terms of permanent services, security of tenure and housing consolidation, as well as ongoing urban management and access to social and economic facilities. There has also been very little collaboration and partnership with communities and CBOs and the creation of livelihoods opportunities in settlements, which are key components of the UISP. There have, however, been efforts to improve the situation from both the side of national government and civil society. In 2016 NUSP developed an extremely comprehensive and useful Resource Kit, which consists of a manual and training materials to enhance the ability of practitioners and key stakeholders to implement upgrading initiatives. The Partnership Framework Agreement mentioned above is one of the latest attempts.

In 2019 a collective of urban development organisations with a wide range of experience in progressive practice around participatory and incremental informal settlement upgrading, and human settlements development more broadly, made a submission as part of the UISP review process mentioned above.<sup>47</sup> The aim of the submission was to promote the recognition of participatory and incremental informal settlement upgrading as a core strategy for ensuring access to housing, basic services and social amenities (including social facilities and public spaces) for the urban poor. The organisations drew on lessons learned in everyday practice to set out the guiding principles, as well as highlight the disjuncture between policy and practice that has been observed through their work in informal settlements.

The submission described and analysed the state of play regarding six key issues that are seen as vital components of a progressive approach to informal settlement upgrading:

FIGURE 1: ELEMENTS OF A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO INCREMENTAL INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING



CAPE TOWN NGO COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE. 2019

The submission articulated how civil society imagines informal settlement upgrading to unfold and how an incrementally developed neighbourhood may look. Embedded within this imaginary is both a critique of current thinking/assumptions and an identification of possibilities, which the national policy then

needs to enable. Other publications have focused on the role of partnerships with local government and how to pursue a people's led approach to informal settlement upgrading, which is a critical area that has been neglected in informal settlement interventions to date.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> 2019-2024 MTSF, p. 176. Phase 3 of the UISP is defined as the provision of permanent services which includes the following: a single standpipe per stand (metered) for water VIP or alternative system; graded or gravel paved road access to each stand; and lined open channels for storm water.

<sup>45</sup> 2019-2024 MTSF, p. 175.

<sup>46</sup> DAG (2021) Press Statement on Minister Sisulu's Human Settlements Budget Vote in the National Assembly (20 May 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Cape Town NGO Collaborative Initiative (2019) Informal Settlement Upgrading Matters: A Submission Into The New Human Settlements Policy (October 2019).

<sup>48</sup> Hendler, Y and Fieuw, W (2018) Exploring partnerships with local government: A people's led approach to informal settlement upgrading. CORC, Cape Town.

**Despite the orientation of the UISP and the ISUPG towards incremental and holistic neighbourhood development, a number of risks have been identified:**

- A narrowly constructed 'sites-and-services' approach as the sum total of municipal practice.
- Solutions and interventions that are technocratic in nature, without meaningful engagement with residents.
- A rigid output-driven approach to development to achieve delivery targets (which are often determined elsewhere).
- Delivery measured in outputs ('taps and toilets'), rather than outcomes and quality of services provided and of relationships.
- Inadequate allocation of capacity to address the scale and complexity of informal settlements.
- Weak governance systems, practices and capabilities, especially to work in a participatory, transversal, interdisciplinary and inter-governmental manner.

to prioritise the safety needs of the community, particularly the most vulnerable groups. Indeed, informal settlement upgrading should incorporate physical, social and economic interventions and should ensure that communities are actively involved in all aspects of the upgrading process.<sup>49</sup> The role of physical improvements and the provision of basic services – electricity, street lighting, proper walkways, safe public spaces and toilets – in informal settlements are crucial. The lack of these heighten vulnerability and provide opportunity for crime and violence to take place, with women, children, people living with disabilities and members of the LGBTQI+ community often the most affected.<sup>50</sup> The location of services and layout of public space matter, and this requires community participation from the outset and continued through the project implementation phase. The development approach envisaged as best practice by both VPI and ISU is one that requires attention to all risk factors and crime and violence from an individual, family, community and structural perspective.<sup>51</sup>

**In essence, a safety lens qualifies the 'what' of informal settlement upgrading (e.g. access to basic services, street lighting, socio-economic amenities) with the 'where' and 'for who' and 'how'.**

Engaging with the upgrading process in an integrated and holistic way requires thinking about individuals, households, neighbours, streets, settlements, neighbourhoods, towns and cities. At the household level, the process is meant to be empowering and affirming, and assist in ensuring a better quality of life ultimately with services and housing that is decent. The formalisation of informal spaces could address risk factors associated with the community by way of environmental design and urban settlement upgrading. Risk factors at the community and social level include: low social integration, insufficient infrastructure, lack of good governance, rapid urbanisation and migration, and difficult access to basic services.<sup>52</sup> Municipal departments such as health, social and economic development can play an important role in addressing these through informal settlement upgrading, and need to be engaged with housing departments, NUSP, the HDA and other role-players.

There are clear opportunities to interpret the component parts of the UISP (up until Phase 3) through a safety lens. For example, in the interim business plans that must be submitted, there is the need to show how the proposed projects fit into the IDP and housing development plan. The municipality must also submit a prefeasibility report which usually includes a desktop layout sketch of the informal settlement to quantify the number of sites required, a preliminary geotechnical assessment, a land availability agreement and bulk engineering assessment. The applications are evaluated against the criteria detailed in the guidelines and rules for implementation. The types of activities undertaken during this phase include a socio-economic survey of the informal settlement participation; registration of households; participation process; and dispute resolution. It is at this stage that initial and crucial engagement with residents takes place and where safety as a key lever for thinking about the type of urban settlement the community envisages can occur. It is also at this early stage that social amenities, as well as economic and community facilities should be discussed, prioritised and planned for in collaboration with key role-players.

The Phase 2 project initiation phase of the UISP provides more opportunities with the submission of a more detailed business plan for approval, but also with the installation of interim basic services

## ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY FOR VPI IN ISU

**The above situation has implications for integrated development planning and the implementation of informal settlement upgrading programmes and projects at the local level. It requires – as does best practice upgrading generally - much more coordinated intergovernmental alignment and coordination between national, provincial and local government as well as the NDHS and NUSP and entities like the Housing Development Agency (HDA) and the Cities Support Programme (CSP).**

Metros have in the past reported annually on their spending in the Built Environment Performance Plans (BEPPs)<sup>53</sup> with the CSP as a resource in the implementation of these plans. Underspensing by provinces and metros on grants has caused frustration and anger both within the sector and within civil society. Where the HDA and the NUSP have been involved in assisting with the preparation and implementation of upgrading plans, there appears to be stronger adherence to the principles of the UISP.

With the new dedicated ISUPG there needs to be an all-hands-on-deck approach to preparing informal settlement upgrading strategies and plans in municipalities and spending the available funding in line with the principles and requirements of the UISP and the new grant framework.

A focus on urban safety and violence prevention in ISU projects requires a systematic approach, one that is informed by a thorough understanding of risk factors within the informal settlement.

It also requires the development and implementation of evidence-based and evidence-led community safety plans and interventions coordinated by the municipality or relevant wards.

This in turn requires new role-players at the neighbourhood and settlement level, in order to embed VPI more deliberately into informal settlement upgrading work. These include the Department of Social Development (DSD), South African Police Service (SAPS), different municipal departments and entities (social development, community safety, economic development etc), community safety groups, religious organisations and community-based organisations (CBOs). There needs to be a much clearer role and mandate of these key role-players in upgrading programmes and projects, and they need to be brought in from the start in planning processes. Upgrading projects currently underway and in planning phases should draw on the lessons from VPI work and interventions which prioritise urban safety.

<sup>49</sup> African Centre for Cities (ACC), Isandla Institute, Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) and GIZ-VCP (2017) Promoting Safety and Violence Prevention Through Informal Settlement Upgrading, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>52</sup> See <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/understand/entry/how-can-we-prevent-violence>

<sup>53</sup> The BEPPs were introduced as a medium-term instrument to support cities in better achieving spatial transformation outcomes. As the reforms enabled by the BEPP were effectively institutionalised by cities, the BEPP was phased out, with the last ones produced for the 2020/21 MTREF. (Source: DORA 2021 Explanatory Notes on BEPPs.)

# REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**This advocacy brief has shown that informal settlement upgrading done through an urban safety and VPI lens can have positive effects. There is considerable alignment between the principles and practice of ISU and VPI, however challenges with implementation and practice over the years means this potential has not been fully unlocked.**

If informal settlement upgrading projects are to benefit residents they need to be participatory, integrated and holistic. Getting this right requires a complex process of negotiations and community participation, with residents involved in the process and in a position to guide and influence upgrading.<sup>54</sup>

Multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships that include key role-players from the built environment as well as the social development, economic development and community safety sectors are critical, both at a programmatic and project level.

## THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE PUT FORWARD:

- NDHS and HDA to place much more emphasis on the livelihoods and urban safety focus of interventions in informal settlements, and on the safety and wellbeing outcomes required by projects that utilise informal settlement upgrading funding.
- Provincial government to develop a provincial strategy for informal settlements, in line with the ISUPG requirement, and embed a focus on safety and livelihoods in this strategy.
- Provinces to support municipalities in their informal settlement upgrading efforts – both in terms of developing municipal informal settlements strategies that embed a safety and livelihoods focus, and in terms of realising health and education outcomes in particular settlements and areas.
- Municipalities to embrace a very different approach to engaging with residents and upgrading settlements that focuses on addressing risk factors and promoting urban safety and wellbeing outcomes as the primary goal, within the development of city-wide upgrading strategies. This implies that social cohesion, peace, inclusion and (past) trauma are explicitly engaged with.
- Cities to draw in a wider range of role-players (including religious organisations, CSOs, local businesses and other spheres of government) to ensure that informal settlement upgrading programmes and projects are integrated and sustainable, and to give due attention to social and economic aspects in upgrading projects.
- Multi-stakeholder project teams, including service providers contracted to work on projects, to familiarise themselves early on with the approaches that best ensure participatory and inclusive upgrading and maximise the benefits of physical, social and economic interventions in an area.

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