





PART TWO:

# Preventing Violence against children

Part two presents a series of eight essays that motivate for greater investment in violence prevention programmes, and outline effective strategies to help break the intergenerational cycle of violence in South Africa.

The essays motivate for:

- a deeper understanding of violence against children;
- a common conceptual framework for violence prevention to guide programme design;
- a systems approach to child protection programmes and services;
- the allocation of adequate financial and human resources;
- the prevention of the use of physical abuse and corporal punishment against young children;
- the prevention of sexual abuse of primary school children;
- the prevention of interpersonal and gender-based violence amongst adolescents; and
- a shift from policies and plans to implementation.

# Overview



**Isibindi safe parks:** Draw children together under the supervision of child and youth care workers

**P**art 2 motivates for strengthening of the evidence base and increasing investment in prevention services to reduce both the immediate and intergenerational costs of violence against children. This collection of short essays stresses the cumulative impact of violence across the life course and the need to intervene early before violence takes place. It highlights the need for intersectoral collaboration to address a complex interplay of risk and protective factors across different settings; and it identifies critical points for intervention across the life course: from early childhood, through the primary school years, into adolescence.

## **Violence against children in South Africa: Developing a prevention agenda** (pages 26 – 34)

South Africa lacks systematic research on the nature and extent of violence against children. This essay reviews the current evidence-base and calls for the strengthening of surveillance systems and research on determinants of violence to target prevention programmes better. It highlights how patterns of violence shift across the life course and their immediate and long-term effects, and it adopts a social-ecological approach to identify key risk and protective factors across different settings.

### **The prevention of violence against children:**

#### **Creating a common understanding**

*(pages 35 – 42)*

It is more effective to prevent violence, than it is to mitigate the effects of violence once it has occurred. Drawing on a public health approach to violence prevention, the essay outlines the key concepts that should inform the design and planning of effective prevention programmes. It emphasises the need to mitigate risks and strengthen protective factors, and assesses the current status of prevention and early intervention programming in South Africa.

### **Towards effective child protection:**

#### **Adopting a systems approach**

*(pages 43 – 50)*

While South Africa has put in place laws and policies to protect children from violence, they continue to experience violence in their homes, schools and communities. This essay outlines the key elements of an effective and well co-ordinated child protection system, identifies key challenges, and makes recommendations towards systems strengthening.

### **Towards effective child protection:**

#### **Ensuring adequate financial and human resources**

*(pages 51 – 57)*

While the previous essay focused on the design of the child protection system, this essay discusses delivery. It questions whether sufficient financial and human resources have been allocated to implement prevention and early intervention services, and if these resources are equitably and appropriately targeted.

### **Young children:**

#### **Preventing physical abuse and corporal punishment**

*(pages 58 – 64)*

Physical abuse and corporal punishment have long-term adverse effects on children's psycho-social and cognitive development. It is therefore vital to intervene in the early years and to provide support to parents and caregivers. This essay identifies a number of critical points for intervention from mental health screening of pregnant women, through to parenting programmes and the prohibition of corporal punishment in the home.

### **Primary school children:**

#### **Widening worlds and increasing risk of sexual abuse**

*(pages 65 – 72)*

Children are exposed to violence not just at home but also in the wider community as they start moving out of the house to attend school. This essay focuses on sexual abuse and stresses the need for early intervention and therapeutic services to minimise the risk of re-victimisation and perpetration. It lists promising programmes, and promotes a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, response and work with offenders.

### **Adolescents:**

#### **Preventing interpersonal and gender-based violence**

*(pages 73 – 79)*

Young people are most likely to be both the victims and perpetrators of violence. This essay explores how gender norms, poverty and inequality intersect to shape violent masculinities. It highlights the need to address the structural drivers of violence by improving young people's access to quality education and employment, and the need to strengthen young people's interpersonal communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills with as focus on gender transformation as a foundation for more respectful and equitable relationships.

### **Adopting a violence prevention approach:**

#### **Shifting from policies and plans to implementation**

*(pages 80 – 85)*

This essay draws together some of the key arguments raised in the preceding essays and reflects on what is needed to translate policy into practice and enable a sustained approach to violence prevention.