ABSTRACT
This Chapter focuses on the challenge of developing safe schools in South Africa, with a particular focus on intentional injury and, therefore, violence prevention in the school setting. The Chapter commences with a snapshot of child and youth violence, more specifically, school violence. The discussion then moves onto an overview of violence prevention in and through schools, drawing on international lessons and recent South African recommendations. Specific strategies believed to be useful in schools are highlighted and briefly discussed. The latter section acts as a springboard for looking at some safe school initiatives that have been developed in South Africa. The Chapter concludes with a summary of key messages relating to building safe schools, followed by recommendations for a way forward to developing safer schools in South Africa. These recommendations focus on adopting a comprehensive approach, addressing wider societal and community factors, ensuring physical safety, developing positive school-community relationships, providing extra-mural programmes, developing a supportive and safe school culture, enforcing discipline, enriching life skills education, and developing and accessing education support services.

Keywords: schools, violence prevention, safety promotion, safe schools

INTRODUCTION
This Chapter focuses on the challenge of developing safe schools in South Africa. This discussion must be held in the context of the book’s overall focus on enabling child safety through prevention and safety promotion. Although mention is made of all forms of unintentional and intentional injury, the primary focus is on intentional injury and thus, violence prevention. General youth violence, as well as the specific phenomenon of school violence, constitutes the key challenges being addressed in this discussion.

The development of this Chapter has drawn on key international reports and South African literature on youth and school violence. A systematic literature review was not attempted. Where appropriate, the research and practical expertise of the authors were also drawn on, particularly for the purposes of developing a framework for developing safer schools. The Chapter provides:
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Terms and definitions

This Chapter focuses on children and youth at primary and secondary schools. While the World Health Organization (WHO)'s World Report on Child Injury Prevention (Peden et al., 2008, p. xv) notes that “there is no universally agreed age range for what constitutes children – a concept that varies considerably across cultures”, this Chapter adopts the definition contained in Article 1 of The Convention on the Rights of the Child: “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 6). However, it should be noted that the definition of youth (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002) includes people between the ages of 20 and 29, and that, in South African schools, it is not unusual to find youth aged 20 years and over attending high school.

The WHO (Krug et al., 2002, p. 5) 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”. Violent acts include physical, sexual, psychological, and acts involving deprivation or neglect. The types of violence identified by Krug et al. (2002) include self-directed, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. These authors distinguish between two main elements of interpersonal violence: family and intimate partner violence, and community violence. School violence, which constitutes a focus for this Chapter, is located within the category of community violence.

Within the context of interpersonal violence specifically, Sethi, Marais, Seedat, Nurse and Butchart (2004) refer to violence prevention programmes as preventive activities or projects that are designed to reduce the level of violence. This involves intervening to eliminate or reduce the underlying risk factors and building on protective factors. Safety promotion refers to processes that aim to ensure the presence and maintenance of conditions that are necessary to reach and sustain an optimal level of safety (Welander, Svanstrom & Ekman, 2004), focusing on both structural and behavioural changes in order to create safe and supportive environments. Peace promotion includes the processes of peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building. Peace-making is directed at reducing the occurrence and intensity of direct violence; peace-making advances methods to encourage positive and nonviolent relations; and peace-building addresses structural violence created through social domination, political oppression and economic exploitation of individuals and groups (Christie, Wagner & Winter, 2001; Suffla, 2004).

a. An overview of school violence, drawing on key international documents and recent local analyses of this phenomenon.
b. A discussion which focuses on violence prevention in and through schools, drawing on international lessons and recent South African recommendations.
c. Specific strategies which are believed to be useful in schools.
d. International and South African models of health promotion, and in particular, the development of Health Promoting Schools, with the latter section acting as a springboard for looking at some safe school initiatives that have been developed in South Africa.
e. Recommendations for a way forward to developing safer schools in South Africa.

CHILD AND YOUTH VIOLENCE: PREVALENCE AND DETERMINANTS

Statistics from the WHO's World Report on Violence and Health (Krug et al., 2002) reveal that the main victims and perpetrators of violence, almost everywhere, are adolescents and young adults, with males being the most vulnerable. This includes fatal, as well as non-fatal violence. Building on the research conducted for the World Report on Violence and Health, the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children (Pinheiro, 2006) provides a global picture of violence against children within the family, schools, alternative care institutions and detention facilities, places where children work, and communities. This report highlights the grave and urgent nature of this global problem, noting that the majority of violent acts are perpetrated by people
who are part of children’s lives, including parents, schoolmates, teachers, employers, boyfriends or girlfriends, spouses and partners. This report notes that the rate of homicide of children in 2002 was twice as high in low-income countries, and that boys, aged 15-17, are generally most at risk.

Although the emphasis in this Chapter is not on unintentional injuries, it is important to note that unintentional or accidental injuries account for almost 90% of the global deaths to those younger than 18 years, and that this burden of injury is particularly high for children who live in poverty (Peden et al., 2008). Once again, boys are at highest risk for all, except fire-related burn injuries.

In South Africa, problems of violence amongst, and affecting, the youth are of deep social concern (Lazarus, Tonsing, Ratele & Van Niekerk, 2009; Parker, Dawes & Farr, 2004). Research has also highlighted that boys and young men in South Africa are particularly vulnerable to becoming both victims and perpetrators of violence, with the ages of 15-29 being a particularly high-risk group (Donson, 2008; Krug et al., 2002).

Reasons for different kinds of violence are often linked to particular risk factors which some authors (e.g., Krug et al., 2002; Lazarus et al., 2009; Sethi et al., 2004) categorise under the various levels of the system: individual, relationship, community and societal factors. The World Report on Violence and Health (Krug et al., 2002) highlights that problem behaviour tends to begin early in a child’s life, with continuity in aggressive behaviour being evident from adolescence to adulthood. This relates to the existence of life course persistent developmental pathways.

Krug et al. (2002) and Pinheiro (2006) identify a number of risk factors relating to youth violence. At the individual level, these include biological as well as various psychological and behavioural characteristics. Relationship factors include family influences relating to parental behaviour and the family environment. This includes poor monitoring and supervision of children, the use of harsh physical punishment to discipline children, parental conflict, poor attachment and family cohesion, family structure, low socio-economic status and education levels. Peer influences also play a role, with delinquency and drug use being primary factors linked to youth violence.

At the community level, dense urban contexts with low standards of housing, and high levels of crime are key situational factors. The presence of gangs and the accessibility of guns as well as drugs and alcohol feed into this. Another major factor at this level is social disintegration, exacerbated by a lack of social amenities. Societal factors that are implicated in youth violence include globalisation, armed conflict, rapid social changes, income inequality, unemployment, and cultural influences. The lack of adequate law enforcement and therefore safety protection is a major factor, while cultural factors can also affect the amount of violence in a society, for example, by promoting harmful cultural practices, and by endorsing violence as a normal method to resolve conflicts, often perpetuated through the media.

In a recent literature study, Lazarus et al. (2009), noted that, for boys, many of the factors listed above link to masculinity and masculine identity. Good, Heppner, Hillenbrand-Gunn and Wang (1995) refer to masculinity as a set of beliefs and expectations about what men should and should not do. This relates to the concept of social identity, and more specifically, the socio-cultural construction of manhood.

SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

A survey conducted by the Medical Research Council in South Africa found that, at a national level, 34% of Grade 9 learners felt unsafe in schools (Medical
Research Council, 2003). With regard to physical violence, the prevalence amongst Grade 9s was 34%. Twelve percent of them reported carrying a weapon, and 9% admitted to carrying a gun over the past 30 days. Sixteen percent of the same learners reported having been threatened or injured at least once on school property over the past six months. Forty-five percent of them reported having been exposed to bullying over the past six months, while 13% reported that they held gang membership. Fourteen percent of Grade 9 learners nationally reported physical violence from their partners over a six-month period.

These findings are supported by Johnson’s (2005) study, involving 472 Grade 9 learners in schools in the Western Cape. Almost half of the learners surveyed reported that they had experienced some form of verbal harassment over the past year. With regard to physical violence, 34% of learners reported being pushed, shoved or hit at least once on school property over the past 12 months. Twenty-five percent were afraid of being beaten up, and 24% had been in a physical fight. Thirty-nine percent of learners reported that they had something stolen or damaged over the past year, while 27% admitted to having damaged school property on purpose. Nine percent of learners admitted to carrying a gun on one or more occasions over the past year on school property; 16% admitted to carrying any other weapon one or more times over the past year; and 7% admitted to carrying any weapon one or more times to school over the past month. An average of 43% of learners reported having seen someone at least once with a weapon on school property during the past 12 months, and 10% reported having being threatened or injured at least once on school property over the past year.

This study (Johnson, 2005) revealed that while both girls and boys were experiencing bullying and harassment, boys were at greater risk than girls, as boys were more involved in physical fighting and more likely to carry weapons to school. Upon closer examination of the findings, it was found that safety was often related to socio-economic circumstances as the learners most at risk were learners who belonged to historically disadvantaged schools. Learners from impoverished backgrounds were also more likely to report relationship violence.

Recent research conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) highlights that “Violence within schools is not a new social problem but is emerging as a cause for serious concern given the recent spate of attacks within South African schools that have claimed the lives of both pupils and educators” (Leoshut, 2008, p. 1). Burton’s (2008b) snapshot of the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention’s National Schools Violence Study reports that schools are places where children are at greatest risk of experiencing a range of crimes, including violent crime. This survey revealed that, at both primary and secondary school levels, learners are at high risk of falling victim to some form of violence. Burton reports that males are particularly vulnerable in this area.

According to the above-mentioned study (Burton, 2008b), classrooms, toilets and open grounds are the highest risk areas in school settings. The most common perpetrators of this violence are fellow classmates and peers, although educators also inflict harm, primarily through corporal punishment. Alcohol and drugs, as well as weapons such as knives, are easily accessible to learners at both primary and secondary schools. The study also shows a strong correlation between experiences at school and the environment to which learners are exposed to outside of this setting. Many children are exposed to various forms of violence, anti-social behaviour and illegal activities, with many reporting on illegal drug use in their own families.
In addition to reporting on the general statistics emerging from the National Schools Violence Study of the CJCP, in another paper, Burton (2008a) notes that it is not only learners who are the victims. Reports show that up to three in five secondary schools have received reports of learner-on-educator verbal abuse, one in four secondary schools have received reports of learner-on-educator physical violence, and 2.4% of schools have received reports of learners sexually assaulting educators.

**VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS**
The World Report on Violence and Health (Krug *et al.*, 2002) notes that individual cognitive, social and behavioural factors and social systems that shape these factors need to be addressed when trying to prevent violence. A number of prevention approaches are identified in this report. At the individual level, the focus should be on individual skills, attitudes and beliefs, with preschool enrichment programmes being identified as an important area of focus. The most frequent strategies carried out in school settings include managing anger, modifying behaviour, adopting a social perspective, moral development, building social skills, solving social problems, and resolving conflicts. Relationship approaches to violence prevention with youth include home visitations, training in parenting, mentoring programmes, and therapeutic approaches such as family interventions. Home-school partnership programmes to promote parent involvement, as well as compensatory education such as adult tutoring, have also been identified as being promising.

Interventions addressing community factors include community policing, controlling the availability of alcohol, providing extracurricular activities, and suppressing gang violence. Strategies within school settings also include providing a physically safe environment, increasing security (e.g., installing metal detectors or surveillance cameras), providing child-care facilities, improving school policies and rules, changing teaching practices and classroom management strategies, and creating safe routes for children travelling to and from school. The provision of effective health care or support services for those who need extra support is also an important area of focus. Societal approaches to violence prevention for youth focuses on reducing economic or social barriers to development.

The UN Study on Violence against Children (Pinheiro, 2006) makes recommendations relating specifically to schools and other education settings. This includes that such settings should be “safe and child friendly and curricula should be rights based, and that schools provide an environment in which attitudes that condone violence can be changed and non-violent values and behaviour learnt” (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 28). Recommendations include:

- The development of codes of conduct.
- The use of non-violent teaching and learning strategies and disciplinary measures.
- Encouraging non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, implementing anti-bullying policies, and promoting respect for all members of the school community.

The World Report on Child Injury Prevention (Peden *et al.*, 2008) identifies the following areas of injury prevention relating to the school context as being the most successful: integrating relevant aspects of the proposed child injury prevention policy and plans of action into education policies and guidelines; implementing these guidelines; strengthening the health system (including the education support system in the school context) to address child injuries; conducting epidemiological and intervention research in schools; and raising awareness of child injury prevention (through staff development, life skills education, as well as parent and community education). Teachers and community leaders are identified as central in many of these strategies.
In South Africa, Burton (2008b) argues for a multi-sectoral approach to dealing with school violence, including parents, homes and the community, as well as various government departments. Burton (2008b, p. 4) argues that “schools can serve as a focal point for communities. Safe schools can serve as important mechanisms for mediating wider exposure to violence... Safe schools can also go some way towards developing pro-social behaviour and a positive affective state among children”.

Burton (2008a) promotes a whole school approach to dealing with violence. This includes identifying places where learners feel unsafe and formulating plans of action to develop an environmentally-friendly school environment. This also includes fostering attachment to schools and learning. This relates to the concept of school connectedness, identified as an important area of protection by many (Johnson, 2005; Johnson & Lazarus, 2008; Lazarus et al., 2009). Burton (2008a) also argues that effective school and classroom management requires a clear policy framework and a code of conduct for learners. Teachers need clear alternatives to corporal punishment, including conflict resolution skills.

Burton (2008a) also argues strongly for afterschool programmes, with a focus on the development of positive life skills, as well as providing extra-mural activities. He also suggests that school governing bodies and other members of the school community should lobby and mobilise local role players and stakeholders to address community and broader societal issues such as basic socio-economic conditions.

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) also provide some detailed recommendations for addressing violence in the school, focusing on the classroom, the curriculum, the school, and local support services:

- In the classroom the role of teachers as role models is emphasised. With regard to dealing with conflict, the authors note that while general conflict management skills will help, the situation may call for additional strategies which include punishment or seeking additional help.
- With regard to the curriculum, Donald et al. (2010) argue that students can be protected from violence through the inclusion of life skills education focusing on interpersonal skills, conflict and anger management skills, communication skills, gender role clarification and sensitisation, and the promotion of positive masculinities through the life orientation programme.
- In the school, school policies need to promote safety and strategies and programmes that address or prevent violence in the school context may need to be developed (Donald et al., 2010).
- The school’s own support team, with the help of the district support team, should play a role in supporting teachers, students and parents/caregivers when they are victims, or perpetrators of violence.

SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

An important component of any violence prevention or safety promotion programme is the existence of enabling legislation. In addition to the international frameworks referred to previously in this Chapter, there are some important policies and legislation that can support violence prevention in schools. Some of these are listed in the Boxes to follow.

BUILDING SAFE SCHOOLS

In this section, we will look specifically at the health promoting schools movement in South Africa (Department of Health [DoH], 2000), as well as the development of the Safe Schools programme in the Western Cape. Some other recent initiatives relevant to the development of safer schools in this context will then be briefly outlined.
Developing health promoting schools in South Africa

The development of the Health Promoting Schools network in the Western Cape province and elsewhere in South Africa has, to a lesser or greater extent, informed the development of programmes aimed at developing safe schools. Frameworks that focus on whole school development have also played a role in this (e.g., Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002).

The health promoting schools approach has developed from the broader health promotion framework (Ottawa Charter, WHO, 1986) which has identified schools as a key setting for health promotion (Jakarta Declaration, WHO, 1997). The National Guidelines for the Development of Health Promoting Schools/Sites in South Africa (DoH, 2000) provides details on this approach in the South African context.

Donald et al. (2010) relate the five strategies of the Ottawa Charter specifically to schools, arguing

South African legislation

South African legislative framework and other mandates relating to building safe schools in South Africa (Western Cape Education Department, 2003):

- Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)
- Criminal Procedures Second Amendment Act (Act 85/1997)
- Employment of Educators Act (EEA) (Act 76/1998)
- Firearms Control Act (Act 60/2000)
- Government Gazette 22754, 2001: Notice 1040
- Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) (Act 181/1993)
- South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act 84/1996)
- Child Justice Act (2009)

South African policies

Education White Paper 6 on Building an Inclusive Education System (Department of Education [DoE], 2001):

Although this policy paper does not focus on violence prevention per se, its focus is on developing a supportive and safe environment for teachers, learners and parents. It is informed by a rights-based value system which emphasises the need to address barriers to learning (found at all levels of the system) in order to ensure both social and academic inclusion of all learners in the curriculum and school context. A major emphasis in this policy is on strengthening the education support services that operate primarily at the level of districts. One of the key roles of these district support teams is to build the capacity of local school support teams to identify and address barriers to learning. This includes addressing any form of violence in and around the school community.

National Curriculum Statement: Life Orientation and Life Skills Education:

The South African National Curriculum includes various Learning Areas, with Life Orientation being one of the compulsory areas included at all levels of schooling. Life Orientation aims to equip learners for meaningful living in a changing society: in other words, for the development of the self in society. Specifically, it aims to provide opportunities for learners to: understand themselves; develop skills and attitudes to improve their social relationships; develop respect for other peoples’ beliefs and values; respect the human rights of all; develop life and decision-making skills; assess career and other opportunities, and set and pursue goals in relation to their potential; learn values and attitudes needed for a healthy and balanced lifestyle; and participate in human movement and development. The core Learning Outcomes for Life Orientation are health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and movement, and orientation to the world of work (DoE, 2002; Rooth, 2005, cited in Donald et al., 2010).
that these five areas need to guide whole school development. The five areas are:

- Building school policies that support well-being.
- Creating supportive environments for teaching and learning.
- Strengthening community participation in the school.
- Developing personal skills of members of the school.
- Providing access to and co-ordinating support services (which provide curative and preventative help with identifying, understanding, and addressing barriers to learning).

These support services from within the school (school support teams) and outside the school (district support teams and other community resources) need to be co-ordinated and made accessible to all who need them. Donald et al. (2010) place a strong emphasis on the need for strong school-community partnerships. Internationally, there is evidence that the constructive involvement of parents/caregivers greatly benefits the school, the students, the parents/caregivers themselves, and their mutual relationships. The need to develop strong school-community relations is also emphasised in many of the policy documents in South Africa (e.g., DoE, 1996, 2001, 2005; DoH, 2000). In addition to the various ways in which members of the community can support their schools, a school can also support its community in many ways.

According to Lee (2004) and Lee, Cheng, Fung and St Leger (2006), the health promoting school strategy promotes self-esteem of students; contributes to staff development; provides parental education; encourages involvement of the whole school community and linkage with different stakeholders; and, in general, enhances positive youth development. It also has the potential to shift the paradigm from handling crises to prevention approaches emphasising youth support before problem behaviour occurs.

The relationship between the development of health promoting schools and resilience has been a particular focus for study in recent times. For example, Youngblade et al. (2007) found that youth who were involved in contexts that provide positive resources from important others (including schools) not only were less likely to exhibit negative outcomes but were also more likely to show evidence of positive development. More recently, Wong et al. (2009) found that in secondary schools that adopted a health promoting schools approach, students and teachers reported significantly higher resilience scores than those schools not pursuing this approach. The authors concluded that the concept of a health promoting school is effective in building resilience among major school stakeholders. The health promoting schools strategy also helps to facilitate school connectedness which has been proven to be the strongest factor in turning youth around from at-risk to resilient individuals (Johnson & Lazarus, 2008).

The Safe Schools Programme

One programme that has been particularly active in the Western Cape has come from the Western Cape Education Department’s (WCED) Safe Schools Division (WCED, 2003, 2009). This Division has a vision of “safe learning institutions for all”, with a mission that states: “The Division Safe Schools strives to create centres of excellence with strong community links, quality learning and teaching and effective management and governance, and, in so doing, combat the root causes of crime and violence” (WCED, 2009).

The Safe Schools Division has a three-pronged strategy for creating safe school environments conducive to teaching and learning (WCED, 2003, 2009). This includes:
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- Crime control (changing the physical environment of each school to create a safe environment).
- Crime prevention (working within the school environment to equip learners, parents and educators with skills relating to learner behaviour, conflict resolution and diversity).
- Systemic partnerships (including mobilising communities, government and civil society to address school violence through an integrated holistic approach).

The three-pronged strategy is integrated into six programme areas already being pursued within the WCED. These programmes focus on:

- Enhancing crime control infrastructure.
- Enhancing school safety management systems.
- Ensuring appropriate law enforcement.
- Integrating school safety within community based crime prevention programmes.
- Building cohesive school community cultures
- Substance abuse programmes.

The Safe Schools Division has developed safety structures for schools to support and encourage safety. This includes school safety committees, safety resource officers, learner support officers, and a Safe School Call Centre. The Safe School Call Centre opened in March 2000 in response to learners’, parents’ and educators’ needs for immediate communication around safety, crime and abuse, as well as a variety of other school-related issues. The Centre also serves as a coordinating centre where referrals are made to appropriate agencies, and from which vital information is disseminated to relevant parties. Specific areas that are commonly addressed through this service are emergency or crisis calls (including gang violence and trauma as a result of incidents of violence or serious injury); school crime (including substance abuse, property-related crime, and physical assault); abuse (including physical or emotional abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse and rape, sexual harassment, corporal punishment, substance abuse, or racial discrimination); and general queries around various issues (including teenage pregnancies and abortion, HIV and AIDS, and general educational matters). The service providers used for this service includes staff employed in the division as well as non-governmental, community-based and faith-based organisations, and specific professionals, when needed.

Nariman Khan, who is the Director of this initiative, has recently reported on a review being conducted to examine whether schools are managing their existing security resources effectively in the Western Cape (Cape Argus, 27 August, p. 10). She noted that although schools are being provided with safety devices (e.g., alarm systems, safety gates, mesh wire, CCTV cameras), they are not necessarily being used effectively. Khan highlighted the need to include safety volunteers to assist in the afterschool hours. She also highlighted the need for safety plans “which should take the school’s circumstances and specific safety issues into consideration”. Schools are also encouraged to work with communities and organisations such as neighbourhood watches, as well as the local police.

Other South African initiatives

The DoE and the Open Society Foundation of Southern Africa (OSF-SA) conducted a study which resulted in the development of pilot interventions in schools in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Limpopo provinces. The Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention designed an approach targeted at the school management team. This was called the Hlayiseka Project which “assists schools to identify and deal proactively with issues of crime and violence through consultation, effective reporting and feedback systems” (Khan, 2008, p. 3). Principles underlying the Hlayiseka Early Warning System include effective democratic school management
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and an inclusive environment where learners feel that they belong. The Early Warning System is built on four building blocks: be prepared to prevent and manage problems, be aware of what is happening at school, take action when something happens, and take care to build a caring school. The toolkit that is provided in this project helps the school to understand and identify security issues and threats; guides schools to respond effectively to security issues and threats; establishes reporting systems and manages reported incidents appropriately; monitors the school’s progress over time; and integrates existing policy and legislation to ensure that school safety is not an add-on. The toolkit comprises a diagnostic tool, learner and educator surveys, a guide for developing safety plans (within the context of partnerships), a system for reporting and recording incidents of violence, developing mechanisms for reporting, and a simple guide for monitoring and evaluation (Khan, 2008).

The Child and Violence Programme of the Trauma Centre, which has been running for about 10 years, aims to reduce levels of aggression at schools and in communities, as well as increase healthy behaviour (Cape Argus, 27 August, 2009, p. 13). The work is curative and preventative and covers not only pupils, but also parents and teachers. The programme approaches the issue of school violence in a holistic manner. Using individual and group strategies, school interventions with staff used in this programme include meditation sessions, self-reflection, learning problem-solving techniques, learning to talk softly to children, and trauma awareness training. Other programmes include anti-bullying projects, the development of social skills groups (for assertiveness training and anger management), parent support groups, themed talks and workshops, and parent effectiveness training.

Finally, the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research’s Crime Prevention Group has recently initiated a community-wide crime prevention initiative, launched in Nyanga in September 2009 (Cape Argus, 15 September, 2009, p.1). Various high risk areas in the Western Cape have been identified for this programme, with key risk factors including child abuse and neglect, alcohol abuse, illegal liquor outlets, and drugs (especially Tik [methamphetamine]), the proliferation of guns, domestic violence, robbery, burglary, taxi violence, unsafe public transport, unkempt open spaces, unemployment and children in conflict with the law. This initiative contains 48 objectives and a comprehensive plan to cover various programmes, including schooling. This programme is an example of a comprehensive strategy aimed at building safe schools within the context of general community safety promotion.

CONCLUSION
Drawing on literature and experiences from South Africa, the key messages summarises the main lessons learnt around building safer schools.

Recommendations for interventions and further research in South Africa include the following:

- **Pursue a comprehensive approach:** When developing programmes to address school violence, it is useful to consider the ecological framework which locates strategies at individual, relationship, community and societal levels. It is also important to identify and work with all relevant stakeholders to develop collaborative and/or coordinated strategies. This systemic approach does, however, require a think globally, act locally approach that works with priorities and limits one’s own contribution to realistic parameters.

- **Address wider societal and community factors:** Although schools have to focus on their primary responsibility of teaching and learning, it is important that at the local
and national level there is an acceptance of the need to prioritise programmes that focus on economic inequalities, poverty, unemployment, and lack of housing. Schools can contribute to these programmes in various ways, both directly and indirectly.

- **Ensure physical security**: Although the need to provide physical safety mechanisms (alarms, cameras, high gates and so on) is undoubtedly valid in high-risk communities, schools and their local communities should see these as short- to medium-term strategies within longer-term action plans that aim to build safe communities.

- **Develop positive school-community relationships**: Although current legislation supports the development of strong relationships between parents/local communities and their schools, various factors act against this. It is important, therefore, for schools to examine how they can foster closer and stronger relationships with the learners’ caregivers (many children do not have parents or they are unavailable) for the purpose of developing a mutually beneficial partnership to support the well-being and development of the young people in their community. Finding ways to support learners’ home environments (e.g., through home visitations) should be included in such a programme, although this has to be located within the limitations of a teacher's role and job. Social workers and other relevant personnel from the DSD and DoH need to be brought closer to the schools in this regard.

- **Provide extramural programmes**: All schools in South Africa should ensure that they provide an extramural programme, drawing on their own staff and members of the community to provide projects and programmes for the children and youth in the afternoons and weekends. Transport to and from school will have to be made safe to ensure that such programmes are possible.

- **Develop a supportive and safe school culture**: All strategies used to develop norms and values in the school context should focus on developing a school culture that is supportive
(thereby promoting school connectedness) and safe. This includes having policies of zero-tolerance for any behaviours that harm another person; school leaders and other teachers acting as role models of self-respect and respect for others; overtly supporting egalitarian gender relations in the school (through behaviour and structural interventions); developing school and classroom disciplinary codes of conduct that are strict but warm in their approach; including values clarification in the life skills education programmes; providing young people (especially boys) with opportunities to develop and undergo rites of passage rituals that help them to move from child/youth to adulthood in a positive way; and rewarding any individual or collective activities that foster pride and a sense of community in the school.

- **Enforce discipline:** In the context of corporal punishment being illegal, schools (with the help of the education administrators and support staff) must find positive alternatives to ensure discipline in the school. The concept of democracy has to be deconstructed to address the popular belief that authority (not authoritarianism) is not legitimate in the classroom and school. A balance between structure and freedom is needed for both teachers and learners to operate effectively. Strategies to develop constructive authority in the schools need to be developed and pursued therefore.

- **Utilise and strengthen the life skills education curriculum:** The South African curriculum has already identified this area as a compulsory part of all learners’ education, from Grade R right through to Grade 12. Safety promotion programmes should not add on to, but rather use the existing curriculum to ensure that violence prevention is pursued in these programmes. The life skills areas identified in the research on violence in schools is already integrated into this curriculum. It may be useful, however, to highlight these aspects, particularly in schools located within high risk areas, and for professional and community members who have their expertise to offer their services to the local schools.

- **Utilise and strengthen the education support services:** The various professionals located at the district support services are mandated to provide both preventative and curative interventions to support the schools in their area. However, the staff in these structures is not always adequately prepared to provide all the support required by the schools, including safety promotion, or dealing with violence when it occurs. Training in safety promotion should therefore be included in the current capacity building programmes for these district personnel – at least for some of them. Schools need to be able to call on help when faced with violence in their schools, and, besides the police, the district support structures are often their first port of call.

The above recommendations constitute some of our thoughts on key areas that need to be addressed, if we are to build safer schools in South Africa.

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