

Governance and society

We investigate, evaluate and assess
governance and society



**Empowering society through our commitment to democracy,
justice and human rights.**

CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Crime and violence are a constant challenge for South Africa and therefore an important area of research for the HSRC. Studies of crime and violence have deepened the HSRC's understanding of the escalating violence in various spheres of South African life.

Our initiatives have resulted in

- Formulating intervention strategies from a social perspective to deal with violent male offenders;
- Highlighting how 'crime and violence' have deep-seated gendered dimensions in a patriarchal and hyper-masculine environment;
- Recommending that identifying, testing and evaluating strategies for reducing the fear of crime be recognised as priorities, alongside that of reducing crime itself;
- Contributing to the estimation of the financial costs to government of providing various services described in the Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Bill; and
- Developing a brief for Resources Aimed at Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN) on effective means of preventing children from joining gangs, and helping them leave once they have joined.

Studies on violent male offenders

Two major ongoing studies on violence were on male offenders who have been convicted for violent crimes, and who are currently serving prison sentences. The first study seeks to understand the individual life histories, circumstances and choices that individuals make, which lead them into a life of violent crime.

The second, national study, investigates the impact of violent crime on social cohesion in South Africa. It focuses on areas that have experienced high levels of violent crime, and compares them to areas with the same demographic and socio-economic profiles to understand whether the social capital and networks of communities impacts on the occurrence of violent crime and shapes their ability to respond.

The goal of both these studies is to generate knowledge that will deepen understanding of the escalating violence and assist in the formulation of intervention strategies from a social perspective.

Gender-based violence

Violence against black lesbians is often overlooked in the broader debates of violence against women and children. A study on gender-based violence, especially 'corrective rape' on black lesbians, is based on a roundtable of stakeholders and 'victims' of violence. In partnership with OUT LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender), the Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre, and the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa, the study shows how 'crime and violence' have deep-seated gendered dimensions in a patriarchal and hyper-masculine environment.

The HSRC also developed a brief for Resources Aimed at Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN) on effective means of preventing children from joining gangs, and helping them leave once they have joined.

The dynamics of fear of crime in South Africa

Fear of personal safety has a complex and detrimental effect on the quality of life at individual, community and societal levels, resulting in racial stereotypes in discussing crime; constraints on people’s mobility and the ability to socialise; a hastening retreat from public spaces and the proliferation of gated communities; high walls; and an array of private security measures. Such anxieties may also diminish the sense of trust and cohesion within communities, as well as provide mounting appeals for the reinstatement of the death penalty and lend credibility to vigilante violence. HSRC surveys tracking the pattern of the nature of fear of crime in the country from 2005 to 2007, for example, showed that people are substantially more fearful of walking alone in their residential areas during the day and after dark compared to 1998 (74% in 2007 relative to 44% in 1998). It also showed that men are just as fearful as women of crime; young people are more fearful than old; and urban, informal settlement dwellers are the most concerned about crime. This research resulted in an HSRC policy recommendation that identifying, testing and evaluating strategies for reducing the fear of crime be recognised as a priority, alongside that of reducing crime itself.

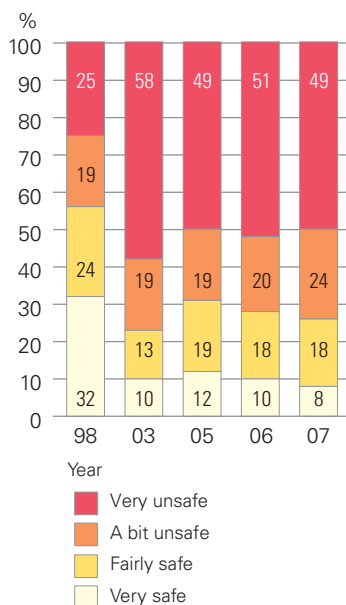


Figure 1. Respondents’ feelings of safety when walking alone in their area after dark, 1998-2007

Substance abuse

Substance abuse has been recognised as an important aspect in contributing towards crime. Given the rapidly changing context of substance abuse in South Africa, the Department of Social Development (DSD) recognised the need to overhaul existing legislation in this area and drafted the Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Bill. Before this legislation was passed, however, it had to estimate its running costs once operational. A multi-disciplinary team estimated the financial costs to government of providing each of the services described in the Bill. The Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Bill has subsequently been passed into legislation.

Youth and crime prevention

A series of briefs on youth crime was developed to contribute to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)’s Local Youth Crime Prevention Toolkit – an innovative package that assists local government in helping youth become assets to their communities and avoid criminal pathways. The HSRC also developed a brief for RAPCAN on effective means of preventing children from joining gangs, and helping them leave once they have joined. This will form background material to RAPCAN’s work assisting government in dealing with children’s involvement in gangs in the Western Cape.

DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND SOCIETY

The HSRC investigates contributions to and constraints on democratisation processes and includes the evaluation of legislation, policies, strategies and the efficiency of public administration. Research in this area seeks to inform public debates, policy development and implementation, and to assess the practice of the state and private bodies in strengthening democracy and accountability.

Our initiatives have resulted in

- Informing the South African Cabinet on pending strategic issues;
- Unearthing key challenges in the integration of traditional leadership;
- Identifying and discussing three areas for strengthening anti-corruption measures;
- Establishing a formalised research network to investigate citizenship and rights;
- Participating in a workshop that will result in policy recommendations on what a democratic developmental state should look like;
- Looking for ways to give the urban poor greater access to power structures and resources;
- Addressing how best to support socially cohesive initiatives; and
- Co-hosting a workshop with the Department of Science and Technology (DST), 'Arriving at solutions for policy implementation'.

Strategic scenario planning

In response to a call for proposals from the Office of the President, 11 papers prepared by HSRC researchers were presented to the Presidency. The papers formed part of a scenario-planning process to inform the South African Cabinet on pending strategic issues. Three of the papers were forward-looking strategy documents: 'The future of South African politics'; 'South Africa's role in global politics'; and 'The importance of social cohesion'. The papers will be published in 2008 as a research monograph.



Workshop on Transformative Social Policy and the Developmental State discussion

Poor people in South Africa participate in democracy in greater numbers than the affluent do: they turn out to vote as well as play their part in civic structures and forums. But what do they get for their faith in democracy and their loyalty to party structures? Not much.

Traditional leadership

A project on traditional leadership, commissioned by the policy unit in the Presidency, assessed the extent to which traditional leadership had been integrated into the democratic system of governance in South Africa. More importantly, the study examined the dynamics that emerge when two historically different systems of governance co-exist, and how these linkages affected citizens. The study was based on the review of government policy initiatives, views of stakeholders on these initiatives, and the evaluation of operational mechanisms that were adopted to implement the policies. The study unearthed key challenges in the integration of traditional leadership and is expected to have a substantial impact on planned policy interventions.

Corruption in the public service

A retrospective assessment of measures introduced by the government to combat corruption in the public service critically analysed anti-corruption legislative, regulatory and policy measures introduced since 1994. The study identified and discussed three areas for strengthening anti-corruption measures: enhancing departmental and specialist agency anti-corruption capacity; improving existing whistle-blowing legislation around confidentiality protection; and amending public service code of conduct regulations to ensure greater consistency and clarity in relation to conflicts of interest.

Migration, citizenship and identity

A research project, involving nine countries, examined perspectives on citizenship and rights, as well as notions of nationhood. A key research concern was how these notions and perspectives affected people living in African states. The study kicked-off with a methodology workshop that brought together African researchers, experts and scholars to discuss and generate lessons and sustainable solutions to the multi-faceted 'crisis' citizenship in Africa. The workshop established a formalised research network where scholars will proceed with the research projects discussed, and produce a monograph. The nine country studies involved Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Democratic and developmental states

What should a democratic developmental state look like? A workshop and public lecture on the subject in November 2007, with UN Research Institute for Social Development Director, Dr Thandika Mkandawire, as lead speaker, was attended by a select group of 40 senior policy-makers and researchers. A follow-up workshop, which will systematically draw upon international experience and pertinent policy and institutional frameworks, will eventually result in a publication and policy recommendations.



Access for the poor to political structures

Poor people in South Africa participate in democracy in greater numbers than the affluent do: they turn out to vote as well as play their part in civic structures and forums. But what do they get for their faith in democracy and their loyalty to party structures? Not much. A conference jointly led by the HSRC, the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), and University of the Witwatersrand Centre for the Urban Built Environment Studies (CUBES), looked for ways to give the urban poor greater access to power structures and resources. Suggestions that emerged included a multi-scalar approach, enabling political mobilisation at the local level to reach and influence metropolitan power structures and decision-making processes. For researchers it means they must take the scales and territories of political mobilisation into consideration to ensure that the poor will be heard. At the metropolitan level and in the political party structures, participation should be taken more seriously. Consolidated participatory structures, at least, should accompany every project that is implemented in poorer areas, which could contribute to decreasing tensions and frustrations on the ground as well as 'making local government work better'.

Social cohesion

The bonds that tie communities together and spawn collaboration, and a sense of identity and mobilisation are internationally recognised as powerful agents of change and empowerment. A project on social cohesion forms part of an ongoing interest in notions of social cohesion, a topic frequently mentioned in important policy statements such as the President's State of the Nation address. The project has generated several papers and reports, which have informed the policy process both within the Office of the President and within the Department of Arts and Culture. During the period under review, the project focused specifically on the solidarity and relationship between people as forms of capital. The project addressed the kinds of values and systems into which South Africans are socialised, yielding important data and conclusions around how best to support socially cohesive initiatives.

Solutions for policy implementation

A workshop, 'Arriving at Solutions for Policy Implementation', hosted jointly with DST for the Portfolio Committee on Science and Technology, was attended by more than 20 members of portfolio committees of Health, Housing, Social Development, Minerals and Energy, Education, Local Government, Labour, and Trade and Industry. The following topics were presented and discussed: HIV/AIDS and the role of the state in the future of child-headed households; capacity building for 2010 and beyond; poverty alleviation; informal settlements and migration: creating sustainable human settlements. Members of Parliament indicated that they found the workshop informative and useful, and especially appreciated the opportunity for extended discussions with the researchers who had conducted the various projects.