



GIZ Gender Competition 2024 Submission (internal mainstreaming)

Learning about and Operationalizing Intersectional and Gender-transformative approaches in GIZ practice

In response to the pressing challenges of gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa, the team of the Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) programme embarked on a transformative journey to strengthen their gender and intersectionality expertise. With the help of an external facilitator and expert on gender and intersectionality, the journey of the team unfolded through a series of carefully crafted workshops, reflections and conceptual deep dives engaging the complex web of inequalities spanning race, gender, class, and other axes of identity and categorising practical implication and applications in the programmes support to programme partners.

Context of the Imperative of Intersectionality and Gender Expertise in South Africa

South Africa faces complex inequalities rooted in race, gender, class, location, ability, and sexual orientation, and other grounds of marginalisation. This shadow left by apartheid is impacting every area of the lives of South Africans. The VCP programme team working in the area of violence and crime prevention in general and GBV prevention in particular is cognizant of the urgent need for intervention acknowledging that transforming the country and turning the tide on GBV is only possible if practitioners of violence prevention have internalised transformative principles through critical reflection of gender, power, marginalization, and intersectionality. Hence, the VCP team embarked on a comprehensive capacitation process aimed at fortifying its gender and intersectionality expertise. This initiative arises not in isolation but as a strategic response to the broader societal context, marked by systemic gender-based violence and the legacy of historical injustices.

Strengthening Gender and Intersectionality Expertise in VCP programme

A pivotal moment of transformation for the VCP team unfolded with the acquisition of co-funding from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) in 2021. GAC as the development cooperation department of the Canadian government is representing a feminist development policy in all its supported projects, Hence, this development prompted an even stronger commitment of the VCP team to addressing GBV and embracing feminist principles within the programme. At the forefront of this paradigm shift was the recognition of the need for a deep understanding of gender, intersectionality, and power dynamics to authentically contribute to gender equality. In response, the VCP team initiated a multifaceted journey, both introspective and operational, facilitated by a dedicated external gender and intersectionality expert. This expert played a crucial role in guiding the team through two comprehensive workshops in November 2021 and June 2022. These workshops, both 2.5 days, were designed to enhance conceptual understandings of gender and intersectionality, linking the concepts to the VCP programme.

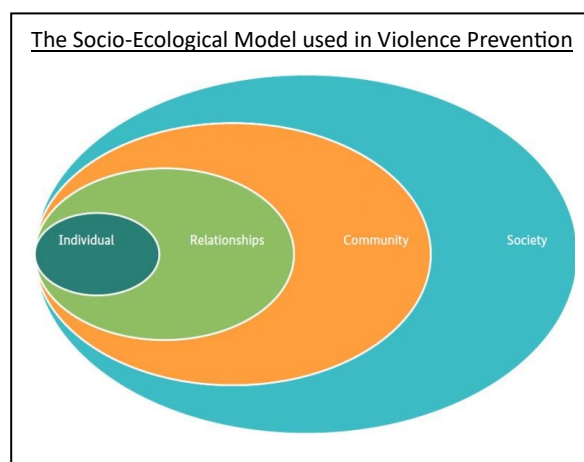
The first workshop in November 2021 aimed at expanding conceptual understandings and facilitating reflection on gender and intersectionality within the VCP team. It set the stage for critical cross-cutting questions and the integration of gender and intersectionality into the operational plan and activities, including the BMZ results matrix and GAC log frame. The subsequent workshop in June 2022 further delved into gender-transformative approaches and intersectionality, reinforcing their links to the VCP programme in an operational sense. These workshops provided the VCP team with a platform to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of gender, gender-transformative approaches, and intersectionality within the context of inclusive violence prevention, aligning with the programme's commitment to the "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) principle.

Beyond the two initial workshops, the gender and intersectionality expert is continuing to engage and mentor regularly in conversations with team members, fostering a collaborative atmosphere of continuous learning. The impact of this capacity-building journey extends beyond self-reflection; it operationalizes gender and intersectionality within the cooperation with partners and informs

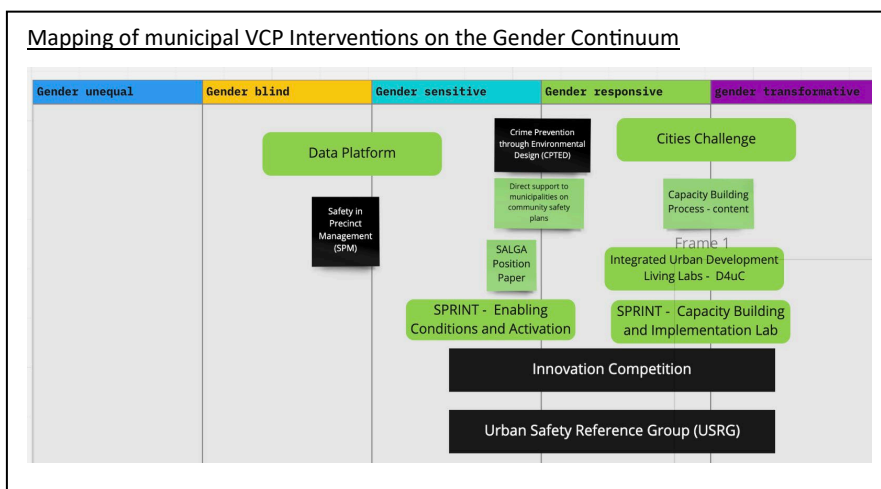
interventions on the ground. The VCP team is actively offering joint capacity strengthening processes also to partners, both within the government and civil society, ensuring a collective and informed approach to violence prevention. This collaborative learning process is a testament to the VCP team's commitment to not only internalizing gender equality and intersectional principles but also cascading this knowledge to partners for a more holistic and effective cooperation.

Operationalizing Gender-transformative Approaches

As a preliminary step to operationalize the programme's contribution to gender-transformative change, the VCP team engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise using the socio-ecological model, which considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors influencing the risk and protective elements related to violence. It also mirrors the quadrants of change model used in GIZ literature on gender-transformative approaches and, hence, is a great logic to explore gender-transformative change in violence prevention. The VCP mapping aimed to not only identify the levels at which interventions were currently operating and creating impact but also to explore opportunities for expansion and synergy within the model to reach a comprehensive societal change in the spirit of real whole-of-society (gender-)transformation.



Mapping of municipal VCP Interventions on the Gender Continuum



Subsequently, the team applied these insights to map activities on the gender continuum, identifying strategic opportunities for advancing interventions to at least gender-responsive and where possible, gender-transformative change.

Process Principles and Learnings

The journey of capacitating the VCP team on gender, power, marginalization, and intersectionality was guided by key principles that not only structured

the workshops but also shaped the team's learning trajectory. Rooted in the understanding that effective capacity building starts with acknowledging existing capacities and expectations, a careful needs assessment was conducted. This initial step set the tone for a process that emphasized working from the 'inside out.' It became evident that creating opportunities for personal reflection and connecting individual experiences with work-related focus was paramount. The team recognized that topics such as gender, power, marginalization, and inequality were not abstract concepts but deeply personal, requiring a safe, open, and trusting space for discussions.

One of the significant learnings emerged from the realization that the work on gender-transformative approaches and intersectionality was not just technical but inherently political. This awareness became central to understanding the challenges and complexities associated with transforming social and structural systems, demanding a nuanced and reflective approach. The need for ongoing supervision, mentorship, and supportive feedback became apparent, addressing the initially underestimated level of support that facilitators needed in such transformative processes. The principles



highlighted that the self-reflection, attitudes, and behaviours of the VCP team were instrumental in successfully implementing gender-transformative programmes.

However, this journey was not without its challenges. The team grappled with the discomfort and unsettlement that came with exploring personal socialisation as well as positionality between power, privilege and marginalisation. Acknowledging the potential triggers of certain activities and concepts, the workshops and ongoing mentoring aimed to prioritize the principles of 'do no harm.' The character of the work as personal, technical and political presented its own set of challenges, requiring a delicate balance, emphasizing the need for the facilitator of the process to navigate the emotional and affective aspects of transformative learning.

Despite the challenges, the team successfully internalized the principles and learnings, paving the way for an organizational environment that allows for joint learning and strengthened the team's capacity in not only gender- but generally transformative approaches. The ongoing commitment to self-awareness, the application of "Leave No One Behind" principle, and the creation of spaces for discussions on anti-discrimination, diversity, and LNOB became embedded in the team's ethos, contributing to a transformative organizational culture.

Outcomes of VCP Capacitation and Operationalisation of Transformative Approaches

The impact of the capacitation process and sustained engagement with gender and intersectionality principles is evident across various dimensions of the VCP programme. This transformative journey has not only shaped individual perspectives but has also catalyzed meaningful changes in team dynamics, programme design, and collaborations with local stakeholders.

- 1. Team Awareness of Positionality:** The heightened awareness of individual and collective positionality within the South African context has proven instrumental in fostering effective partnerships. Acknowledging the historical trauma from colonialism and apartheid, the team is now more adept at navigating their role as German development cooperation. This understanding enhances trust-building and ensures culturally sensitive and context-specific interventions.
- 2. Enhanced Team Cohesion and Participation:** The self-reflective discussions on positionality, though occasionally challenging, have contributed significantly to team cohesion. Team members actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered. Although the team has always been characterised by inclusivity, this process has increased deliberate efforts for diversity and inclusiveness for collective commitment to shared goals.
- 3. Integration of Gender Capacitation Processes in Interventions:** The capacitation process has directly influenced the design and implementation of interventions supported by the VCP programme. In VCP initiated activities like a grassroots innovation competition on GBV prevention in urban spaces, participants receive dedicated training on intersectionality and gender. This empowers them to address societal norms and power structures systematically, contributing to more effective and sustainable interventions. Similarly, the National Youth Resilience Initiative now incorporates gender and intersectionality training, enabling youth champions to adopt an inclusive approach in promoting resilience against violence among their peers.
- 4. Engagement with Partners on Intersectionality and Transformative Change:** The impact extends beyond the VCP team to strategic partnerships. The steering committee, after a dedicated session on gender and intersectionality, has shown a keen interest in deeper engagement. Subsequent sessions with partners like the Urban Safety Reference Group and the Department of Basic Education have provided valuable insights. These sessions serve as platforms for capacity-building and operationalizing gender-transformative change and intersectional approaches with and within partner organizations.



5. Increased Requests for Further Support: The success of the capacitation process has led to an increased demand for further support also from programme partners. Steering committee members and further also civil society stakeholders have proactively sought additional sessions to delve deeper into gender-transformative change and intersectionality.

In summary, the impact of the capacitation process is palpable in both internal team dynamics and external collaborations. By fostering a nuanced understanding of gender, power, and intersectionality, the VCP programme is better equipped to address the complex and multifaceted challenges of violence prevention in the South African context.

Ongoing and Next Steps

As described, the journey of capacitating the VCP team has not only been transformative for the individuals involved but has significantly shaped the trajectory of the programme itself. In the spirit of continuous learning and improvement, the programme continues with the following

- 1. Ongoing Support and Mentorship:** The learning process is dynamic, and continuous support is paramount. Hence, the programme is establishing mechanisms for ongoing mentorship and support, both internally and through external experts, will help sustain the momentum. This is done through regular check-ins, targeted workshops, and opportunities for reflection.
- 2. Dedicated Workshops on Measurement Frameworks:** The challenges associated with assessing transformative change, underscore the need for dedicated conversations on tracking and measuring change. These sessions are providing a platform for refining and adapting qualitative monitoring strategies.
- 3. Integration of Gender-Transformative Approaches into Daily Work:** While the capacitation process has equipped the team with knowledge and skills, the true impact lies in the application of these principles to daily work. Today, discussions on gender and transformative change are an integral and mainstreamed part of the teams daily engagements internally as well as with partners. This is in contrast to dedicated "Gender Slots" in e.g. team meetings, through the reflective journey of the team, transformation has become an intrinsic and constant part of the VCP programme's work.
- 4. Expanding Capacitation to Partners:** The success of the internal capacitation process positions the VCP team as potential facilitators for similar processes with external partners. Sharing the learnings and methodologies with government departments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders is contributing to a broader impact on violence prevention efforts in South Africa.
- 5. Impact on Programme Design and Implementation:** The capacitation process has fundamentally influenced how the VCP team conceptualizes and implements violence prevention activities. The intersectional lens applied during mapping activities has revealed opportunities for more targeted interventions. The impact is tangible in the team's ability to design programs that address root causes and contribute to actual transformative change.

In conclusion, the VCP programme's transformative journey towards enhanced gender and intersectionality expertise stands as a testament to its commitment to creating meaningful change. Through introspective workshops, strategic alignments, and ongoing support, the VCP team has embraced a holistic approach to change in the complex landscape of South Africa. This journey not only deepened individual and collective understandings but also catalyzed impactful interventions and collaborations. As the VCP programme continues to navigate the intricate intersection of gender, power, and societal dynamics, its strengthened capacity positions it to contribute to lasting positive transformation in the communities it serves.