



GIZ Gender Competition 2024 Submission (GG1)

Transforming Lives, Shaping Futures: A Collaborative Approach to Tackle Gender-Based Violence in South Africa

In the complex landscape of South African communities, the Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) programme, in partnership with two municipalities and civil society, has pioneered a collaborative model for the large-scale implementation of a proven gender-based violence (GBV) prevention approach. Rooted in the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures (SSCF) approach, this initiative strategically confronts patriarchal gender norms, livelihood challenges, and GBV in former townships through fostering open dialogue on critical issues such as sex, relationships, and financial empowerment and becoming an important pillar for personal empowerment and reshaping societal norms. The partners created a collaborative blueprint to address immediate challenges in communities but also to usher in sustainable change for thriving, GBV-free communities long-term.

Challenge of High Rates of GBV and Boundaries with Resourcing Violence Prevention

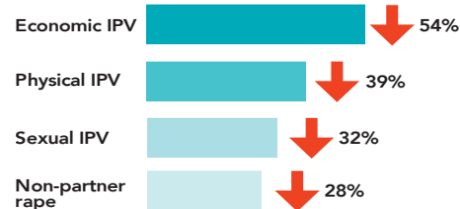
South Africa is experiencing devastating rates of violence and crime, with GBV being described by the president as a nationwide “pandemic”. A situation of 25 to 40 % of South African women having experienced some form of intimate partner violence (IPV) and a femicide rate five times the global average, is calling for urgent intervention. The prevalence of GBV is particularly pronounced in former townships, where the convergence of patriarchal gender norms and challenging livelihoods create a breeding ground for violence. In these marginalized communities, especially young people bear the brunt of oppressive norms and economic hardship, reinforcing the cycle of GBV.

Amidst this backdrop, the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures (SSCF) approach emerged as a transformative response that has proven to significantly reduce GBV, IPV in particular. Through uniquely tackling the intertwined issues of gender norms, livelihoods, and GBV, SSCF seeks to challenge patriarchal norms while empowering individuals economically. However, implementing SSCF at scale poses significant challenges as funding constraints and a centralization of the implementation capacity with the NGO Project Empower present obstacles that demand innovative solutions. In response, the VCP programme, in collaboration with Project Empower and local municipalities and civil society, pioneers a model for the large-scale implementation of SSCF—a model that holds the promise of making a significant contribution of breaking the chains of GBV in former townships.

The Stepping Stones and Creating Futures Approach

The Stepping Stones and Creating Futures approach operates on the premise that true transformation requires a multi-faceted approach. It delves deep into the societal fabric, challenging entrenched gender norms that perpetuate violence and intertwines discussions on sex, gender and relationships with economic empowerment, creating a safe space for young people to openly dialogue. Reminiscent of a “women’s/ men’s conference,” the 21 session long and participant driven approach allows 20 young men and women between the age of 18 and 35 in a SSCF group to discuss taboo topics freely, question and rethink learned societal norms and identify new ways of positioning themselves in a gendered society. This transformative methodology under boosted by supporting the young people to develop a sustainable strategy to build a livelihood with the resources available to them, has proven to significantly reduce IPV and positively impact a range of social risk factors for violence in general and GBV in particular.

The Impact of SSCF



- Increases women’s monthly earnings, and increases women’s and men’s savings, and engagement in the labour market
- Improves women’s and men’s ability to communicate with their partners in ways that build stronger, and longer lasting relationship
- significant reduction in alcohol use and drug abuse with men
- Reduction of sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV or HSV2

More information on the impact of SSCF and research done can be found [here](#).

SSCF is not merely theoretic but a proven intervention. Research findings by the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and Project Empower substantiate the positive outcomes of SSCF (as per above info box).

VCP Supported Methodology of Delivering SSCF Large Scale and Sustainable

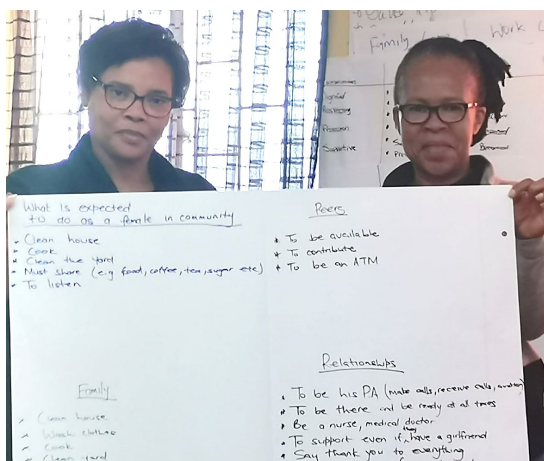
The NGO Project Empower co-developed the SSCF approach for the South African context together with the SAMRC and currently is the only NGO that holds the capacity on the evidence-informed implementation of the approach. In order to roll out SSCF sustainably at a large scale in South Africa, the VCP programme together with Project Empower, the Stellenbosch and eThekweni municipalities as well as local civil society developed a strategic Master Training initiative as a critical introduction to institutionalize SSCF within further organizations and locations.

During 2023, a train-the-trainer model (Phase One ‘Master Trainings’) was implemented in the two municipalities, capacitating about 30 municipal officials and NGO representatives working with communities on the ground to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to propagate SSCF within their communities. This approach of a 25 days-training not only empowers the trainees to run SSCF groups themselves but enables them - in a second phase starting in early 2024 - to train further SSCF facilitators that can then themselves run SSCF groups (Phase Three). This ensures the longevity and immense scale up potential of the intervention in the municipalities and NGOs by decentralizing its implementation. Thereby, the local multi-stakeholder partnerships play a pivotal role, fostering collaboration between municipalities, NGOs, and other local stakeholders. This collaborative synergy not only addresses the unique challenges within former townships but also enriches the intervention with diverse local

Impression from SSCF Sessions



Body Mapping Exercise



Exercise questioning ‘What is expected to do as a female in community’

* pictures from SSCF Master Training in Stellenbosch

perspectives and expertise. Please refer to the overview of phases on page 3.

An important aspect of the upscaling model is its alignment with the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), a strategic lever for sustainable impact. Leveraging EPWP resources, the model transcends traditional boundaries of the public employment programme, recruiting EPWP participants as SSCF facilitators trained by the Master Trainers. This is transforming EPWP participants from mere stipend recipients to active agents of change within their communities. The benefit of this approach is twofold: it creates an income and valuable experience for EPWP participants, but it also accelerates the scale-up of SSCF and unlocks EPWP as a resource for safety interventions across South African municipalities.

Reach and Scalability

The potential impact of the SSCF approach via the Master Training is far-reaching, both in terms of personal transformation and community-wide influence. With 30 trained SSCF Master Trainers in Stellenbosch and eThekweni, the ripple effect is substantial. Each Master Trainer possesses the capacity not only to conduct SSCF groups with community members but also to impart their expertise, co-training one to two groups of new SSCF facilitators. As these facilitators, in turn, launch SSCF groups, a cascade of transformative dialogues can unfold in communities. Beyond personal development in terms of transformative norms and economic strengthening, this multiplication of SSCF groups forms



a dynamic network, fostering a collective ethos of empowerment, challenging gender norms, and contributing to the broader societal shift towards gender equality and violence prevention.

However, the potential reach of the intervention extends beyond the immediate communities in Stellenbosch and eThekweni, envisioning a broader impact through knowledge sharing and financial advocacy. The two municipalities, having undergone the Master Training, stand poised to share their insights and experiences within national municipal forums like the Urban Safety Reference Group. By disseminating their learnings, they become torchbearers, inspiring other municipalities to adopt a similar model for SSCF implementation. Additionally, the development of a comprehensive costing model is underway, aiming to indicate the precise financial cost for each SSCF group participant reached through the initial Master Training. With this data, municipalities can make targeted funding requests to the South African National Treasury, while NGOs gain a persuasive tool for engaging with donors, propelling the broader scale-up of SSCF across South Africa.

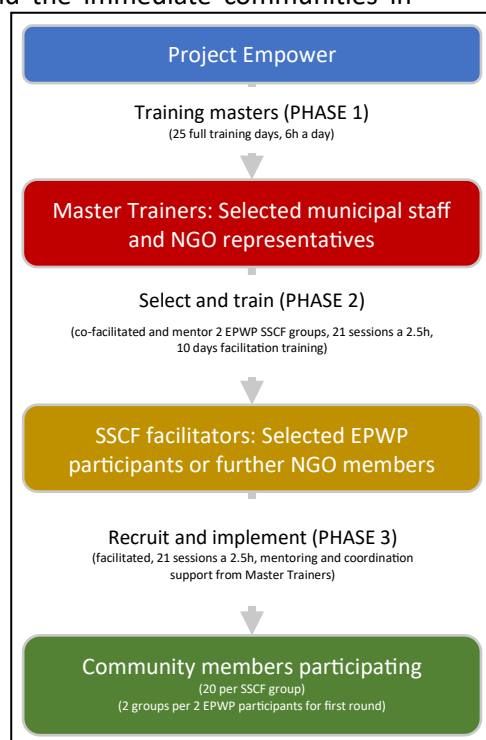
Importance of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Sustainability

The collaboration that led to the great success and potential of the identified scale of model SSCF is not a passive agreement but needed active and participatory engagements. The concept for the model was co-developed by the municipalities and local NGOs supported by the GIZ VCP programme. Several engagements, facilitated with open communication channels where everyone shared honest concerns and solutions were jointly identified, fostered a shared sense of ownership and commitment. Through collective problem-solving, the partners ensured the intervention remained and will remain -throughout the Master Training, facilitator training and SSCF group implementation phases - responsive and adaptive to the evolving dynamics within the communities they are serving.

Integral to the multi-stakeholder partnerships is the institutionalization of capacity within municipalities and NGOs for SSCF implementation. This ensures long-term success by leveraging local expertise and experience. Empowering local stakeholders to implement SSCF guarantees cultural sensitivity and context relevance, tapping into their nuanced understanding of community challenges. This commitment fosters sustainability and places the tools for change directly in the hands of those intimately connected with the communities they serve. The involved stakeholders are currently even expanding their partner landscape for further scale-up strategies, including leveraging the potential of the private sector to fund implementation costs and integrate SSCF seamlessly into participating organizations' efforts.

Furthermore, advocating for and showcasing the utilization of the EPWP participants for the intervention has emerged as a key element in the scale-up model as many municipalities are not making full use of the funding potential available to them for EPWP. Hence, the stakeholders engaging around the EPWP has enabled the programme to go beyond providing economic opportunities, but EPWP participants become ambassadors of change within their communities.

Furthermore, partners, in acknowledging the success of this implementation model, have recognized its significant contribution to the localized implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence through the whole-of-society. The collaborative approach has had a profound impact on partners, fostering a heightened awareness not only of the importance of addressing GBV but they exemplify a realistic and large-scale manifestation of national policies at local level through the whole-of-society showcasing state-non-state cooperation. Furthermore, partner demonstrated their commitment by allocating resources, with staff dedicating 25 days to become facilitators/trainers.



Partners have acknowledged and appreciated the measure not only for its positive impact on communities but also for enhancing their own organizational ethos and dedication to GBV prevention.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

One of the foundational pillars of the intervention is the strategic investment in capacitation and trust-building. The engagement was not only understood as a logistical requirement but as an essential element in the delicate process of introducing the intervention to challenge ingrained gender norms. Initially during the engagements, reasonable skepticism and concerns about the time commitments from municipalities and NGOs for the Master Trainings were raised, however, through open communication and demonstrating the urgency of addressing GBV through an approach that actually has proven to show impact, the partners committed to the intervention. Furthermore, the partial focus of SSCF on economic strengthening of young people often experiencing financial hardship, as well as the benefit of enlisting young, local facilitators for SSCF have proved instrumental, emphasizing the importance of community connections for effective GBV prevention.

Furthermore, as a core principle of the intervention is its adaptability to new communities and flexibility to local contexts, as the SSCF approach is strongly driven by participants. Additionally, the successful engagement of EPWP participants as capable SSCF facilitators highlighted the potential for scalable, community-driven interventions.



Graduation of SSCF Master Trainers in Stellenbosch

Although, the training for SSCF Master Trainers and facilitators is an intense time and resource commitment, a key lesson is the critical role of skilled facilitators to be able to hold the space for SSCF group participants during the sessions. However, the realization that EPWP participants could effectively implement the complex SSCF approach offers a valuable learning point as it showcases that no prior social work or facilitating experience is needed but rather the openness to engage on gender norms and intrinsic motivation to better the community. This insight not only

opens avenues for sustainable scaling SSCF through the EPWP but also emphasizes the potential for incorporating similar models in other GBV prevention interventions.

Scaling Up SSCF as Implementing Feminist Core Principles

The SSCF approach and delivery method supported by the VCP programme seamlessly align with the feminist core principles advocated by the German government, embodying a commitment to human rights, gender-transformative strategies, post-colonial insights, and a power-critical lens. The SSCF intervention serves as an impactful vehicle for empowering individuals to exercise their inherent right to a life free from gender-based violence. Going beyond immediate challenges, it fosters societal transformation by challenging traditional gender roles and facilitating authentic conversations on sex, relationships, and financial empowerment. Embracing intersectionality, the approach acknowledges and addresses unique challenges based on individual identities and lived experiences in South African communities. With cultural sensitivity and responsiveness, also the supported delivery methods through the Master Trainings adopts a post-colonial perspective, recognizing historical legacies' impact on gender norms. Applying a power-critical lens, the intervention engages stakeholders in collaborative decision-making, striving to redistribute power and ensure co-created, sustainable change.