CSVR

REFLECTION REPORT

**Participatory Methods in Violence Prevention:
Lessons from CSVR's Collaboration with the
Community Work Programme in South Africa**

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The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) is an independent nongovernmental organisation established in South Africa in 1989. We are a multi-disciplinary institute that seeks to understand and prevent violence, heal its effects and build sustainable peace at community, national and regional levels. We do this through collaborating with, and learning from, the lived and diverse experiences of communities affected by violence and conflict. Through our research, interventions and advocacy we seek to enhance state accountability, promote gender equality and build social cohesion, integration and active citizenship. While primarily based in South Africa, we work across the African continent through collaborations with community, civil society, state and international partners.

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Abstract

CSVR has been conducting research on South Africa's Community Work Programme (CWP) since 2010. In 2016, the organisation commenced with an effort to strengthen urban violence prevention interventions carried out by CWP through their work. This report, which is based on the reflections of CSVR staff who collaborated with CWP participants to pilot new violence prevention interventions, shares some of CSVR's lessons on bridging the gap between participatory approaches theory and practice. These lessons relate to considerations around interventions life cycles, participatory project planning, budgeting, as well as the importance and challenges associated with iterative learning. The report also suggests practical considerations and steps to take to determine the level of participation that is possible and how to maintain it.

1 Introduction

As noted in its mission statement, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) seeks to learn from the diverse and lived experiences of communities affected by violence and to collaborate with them so as to better understand and prevent violence and conflict. The organisation works with individuals and groups on the ground to identify the context-specific causes of violence, strengthen community-based interventions, and address the effects of violence through support and rehabilitation efforts, with a focus on building their capacity to assist other community members in responding to violence. This approach has led CSVR to try a range of participatory methods in order to access and foreground the knowledge of those living in areas with high levels of violence. The aim has been to co-design interventions that are both responsive to community dynamics and build on existing efforts, and to ensure that these interventions have local buy-in and are sustainable in the long term, including in cases where CSVR is no longer involved. Over the years, it has become clear that participatory methods deepen community members' investment in interventions and enable the mutual exchange of knowledge and solutions between CSVR staff and project participants. It has also become clear that such methods present particular and often unexpected challenges for practitioners in nongovernmental organisations like CSVR, which work on tight budgets and timelines. The literature on participatory methods frequently does not discuss such challenges in depth, as it tends to be either theoretical, normative, or laudatory of particular initiatives. This report seeks to provide a practitioner perspective on using participatory methods in violence prevention efforts by outlining lessons learned from one project, CSVR's collaboration with the Community Work Programme (CWP).

Since 2013, CSVR has been working with the CWP, a South African public employment initiative, to assess and deepen its contribution to violence prevention. Based in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), the CWP serves as a safety net for unemployed and underemployed people in more than 200 sites around the country, providing a stable basic income with work prioritised through community consultations. CSVR's early research showed that CWP participants, having identified violence as an obstacle to development and social cohesion, often engage in violence prevention activities of their own accord (Bruce 2015). Building on lessons suggested by this research, CSVR partnered with CoGTA and the CWP in 2016 to pilot new violence prevention interventions and assess implementation challenges in four diverse CWP sites. The project sought to inform policy development and strengthen violence prevention within the CWP as the government prepared to scale up the programme. Central to this endeavour were CWP participants, whose local knowledge, access to other community members, and own experiences with violence and violence prevention ensured that the interventions were tailored to each CWP site.

In their efforts to tap into CWP participants' understanding of and solutions to local violence issues, CSVR staff were guided by Paolo Freire's (1994) approach to people-based community practice. This approach, founded on collaborative and experiential learning, creates a space and facilitated process for diverse participants to work together to analyse problems they are collectively facing

and to conscientise themselves and each other regarding their causes. This critical awareness leads participants to identify strengths within their community that they can mobilise to address problems, and thereby to a process of 'action–reflection–action' in which they continuously analyse and act on emerging issues using local knowledge and resources. An equal relationship with practitioners facilitating the process fosters collective learning, with participants and practitioners educating each other through dialogue. The transformative potential of iterative learning and critical awareness creates the basis for sustainable change in the community (Freire 2004; 2008; Schenck, Nel and Louw 2010). Taking this approach, and building on previous research and relationships with the CWP, CSVR staff collaborated with CWP participants to develop violence prevention interventions through: training on different types of violence and best practices in violence prevention; participatory action research in the form of community-based situational analyses; strategic and intervention-specific planning processes; co-authoring of materials used in the interventions; and network building with key stakeholders for sustainability. CSVR staff sought to work with CWP participants as equals, facilitating activities and providing structure for the dialogue and knowledge elicited through the project.

This report first places the project's lessons in context, presenting a brief summary of the process of piloting the interventions in the four CWP sites. It then outlines the lessons themselves, focusing on practical concerns raised by participatory methods, with suggestions for practitioners embarking on similar initiatives. The report engages with issues such as deciding on the level of participation that is possible, acknowledging time and other constraints, designing tailored and accessible collaborative learning processes, adopting a participatory approach to stakeholders and conducting regular reflection, monitoring, and evaluation exercises. Through this, it highlights ways to address the challenges of working intimately and on a more or less equal basis with community members in the service of lasting social change.

2 Project Summary: From Training to Sustainable Interventions through Participation

From 2013 to 2015, CSVR conducted research in Manenberg, Grabouw, Kagiso, Ivory Park, Orange |Farm, and Bokfontein—six diverse CWP sites that represent a cross-section of South African communities across three provinces. The research demonstrated that the CWP contributes to violence prevention by addressing the underlying causes of violence through employment and income provision, confronting immediate causes of violence through patrols and safety campaigns, and building social cohesion and community capacity to act collectively to reduce violence (Langa et al. 2016). CWP participants and other stakeholders in these sites suggested that the CWP's efforts would be strengthened by training on best practices and new ideas in violence prevention. They identified a particular need for training in six topics: preventing gender-based violence; designing interventions with men, the primary perpetrators of violence; dealing with substance use as a driver of violence; improving parenting skills in the community; working with ex-offenders to ensure rehabilitation and reintegration; and adopting self-care methods to counter stress, burnout, and vicarious traumatisation (CSVR 2017).

CSVR took this feedback into the second phase of the project, which took place from 2016 to 2018. The organisation recommended that the six topics identified in the first phase be the basis of a series of training and interventions that would be piloted by CWP participants in Orange Farm, Ivory Park, Tembisa, and Erasmus—a combination of existing and new partner sites grouped in one province, Gauteng. The second phase began with a two-day workshop and subsequent consultations with experts working in the six focus areas.[1] Based on this knowledge exchange, as well as an extensive review of the literature on local and international community-based interventions, CSVR produced a draft manual that outlined key concepts, local and international best practices, and potential activities for the upcoming training. Thereafter, it held consultative meetings on the suggested content, activities, schedule, participant selection process, and monitoring and evaluation tools of the training, first with representatives of CoGTA, CWP implementing agents and CWP site managers in Gauteng, and then with the implementing agents, site managers, and several site coordinators working in Orange Farm, Ivory Park, Tembisa, and Erasmus.

The managers of the four sites were central to the final format of the training. While CSVR expected to train CWP participants in up to three of the focus areas, depending on the violence prevention needs of each site, the CWP site managers and selected coordinators suggested that the training cover all six topics so that the participants could learn and discuss as much as possible. In addition, while CSVR expected to be involved in participant selection, the site managers preferred to conduct the selection because they knew all of the participants at the site, their interests, and community or personal dynamics that might support or undermine their participation in the project. In the spirit of collaboration, CSVR adopted these recommendations and provided the site managers with

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1. For example, Khulisa and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention Programme on community-based violence prevention, the Medical Research Council and Sonke Gender Justice on gender-based violence and working with men, the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence on substance use, the Seven Passes Initiative and Mikhulu Trust on parenting, NICRO and the University of South Africa on working with ex-offenders, and the CSVR clinical team on self-care.

guidelines for participant selection. A mix of ages and genders, the participants required no formal qualifications beyond being positive role models in their communities, residing close to a training venue, and committing to the aims and full duration of the project, with participation in previous violence prevention and community-based interventions a plus. CSVR suggested 40 participants per site in order to ensure that the training would reach a broad audience and to account for potential attrition. The organisation asked the site managers to explain the project's aims and activities in detail before the participants signed consent forms. As arranged with CoGTA and the CWP, the participants would engage in project activities during their normal CWP working days, without receiving additional remuneration.

Between March and May 2017, CSVR conducted ten days of training at each site, with a day or two dedicated to each focus area and a week's break in the middle to give participants time to reflect on and consolidate the information they had discussed. After introductions, the training began with a baseline assessment of participants' pre-existing attitudes and levels of knowledge on each focus area, in the form of a questionnaire the participants could complete in a language of their choosing. CSVR staff then made presentations on the day's topic and encouraged in-depth engagement through facilitated sessions that included large group discussions, small group work, community mapping, role play, and elicitation tools such photographs, charts, and documentary videos, as well as first-person testimony from individuals affected by the issues, for example, an ex-offender. Towards the end of the ten days, participants collaborated on planning new violence prevention interventions based on the discussions in the training training. They used a template designed by CSVR staff that asked for a description of each intervention, a list of relevant stakeholders, existing community resources that could help with the intervention, a process for reflecting on the intervention and measuring its impact, and a proposed budget. One CSVR staff member at each site took reflective notes on the training process for each focus area, which were later combined into a report for internal organisational learning. Experientially and through the reflection notes, CSVR facilitators learned from the training as they progressed and adjusted the activities in other sites in response. At the end of the training period, participants completed the same questionnaire as at the beginning, in order to gauge and reflect on changes in attitudes and knowledge levels.

Using the plans drafted during the training as a starting point, participants in each site held two- to three-day in-depth intervention planning workshops in June and July 2017. They voted individually for one or two of the six areas on which to focus. Through group discussions on the outcome of the vote, they decided to work on parenting challenges in Orange Farm, gender-based violence and substance use in Ivory Park and Tembisa, and substance use in Erasmus. After discussing strategic planning with CSVR staff—including objectives they would like to achieve and the steps that might take them there—participants developed intervention plans that included a list and schedule of activities, expected outcomes and the means of verification for each activity, stakeholders to involve in the process, and a budget. Once participants began deciding what to discuss with community attendees in each intervention, however, CSVR staff noticed that the content was largely schematic and that participants often relied on CSVR to flesh it out. Participants also hardly used the training materials in

developing their ideas, relying instead on personal assumptions about each issue—for example, that victims of gender-based violence (including physical and sexual violence) are not aware that what is happening to them is wrong or illegal.

This led CSVR staff to suggest that participants conduct a situational analysis on their chosen focus area(s) in each site, using interviews with community members in combination with their training to broaden their perspective on the issues. Once the CWP participants agreed that this would help with the development of the content, CSVR developed a questionnaire, which participants edited through group discussions. The organisation then provided basic guidelines on ethical primary research and practised conducting interviews through role play. After participants conducted about 160 interviews across the sites in August 2017, they worked with CSVR staff to identify the main themes that emerged in the interviews and used these insights to clarify their assumptions and develop content. Participants noted that the situational analyses helped them identify gaps in community awareness that could be addressed through their interventions. For example, the situational analysis in one site showed that because community members were already aware of the risks and harms associated with substance use, it would be more useful for the CWP participants to develop content on how community members could assist family members struggling with substance dependence.

After fleshing out their plans, participants implemented 37 interventions between August 2017 and September 2018. These consisted of producing and distributing pamphlets and organising stakeholder meetings, community workshops, support groups, dialogues, and school talks. Most sites began with a meeting between participants and community, civil society, and state stakeholders, including representatives of community-based associations, nongovernmental organisations, and various governmental departments, such as the Department of Social Development and the South African Police Service (SAPS). These meetings raised participants' awareness of resources and facilities available in the area, how various stakeholders engage in violence prevention, and what more can be done. They also helped participants establish referral networks in the community and form relationships to build the sustainability of their interventions. In some sites, participants have been invited to continue engaging with stakeholders and begun to explore registering their groups as non-profit organisations, which suggests that the interventions will have a life beyond the project. During interventions, participants administered pre-activity questionnaires with attendees on attitudes and levels of knowledge on the topic at hand. CSVR conducted telephonic interviews with some of the individuals reached through the project's activities, in order to gain a sense of the extent of attitude and behaviour change in the aftermath of the interventions, and thereby their impact. Those contacted provided some insights into the strengths and challenges of the interventions carried out by the CWP participants.

For participants, the project represented an opportunity to learn about applying key concepts and best practices in violence prevention, planning and budgeting for interventions, using research tools to gather and analyse information, forging connections with stakeholders to build sustainability, and monitoring and evaluating the impact of their interventions. Individual conversations and focus group

discussions with participants suggest that the process strengthened their existing awareness of the causes and effects of violence in their communities, the local resources they can draw on to address it, the value of CWP work, and their own capacity to design effective interventions. For CSVR, the project findings are the basis of knowledge generation on the potential for violence prevention through public employment programmes, as well as evidence-based advocacy with CoGTA and other stakeholders towards increasing the CWP's capacity to reduce violence. Importantly, the project has enabled CSVR to learn about violence prevention strategies from CWP participants and to reflect on its own way of working in order to improve its efforts. One aspect of this has been extending its knowledge on the benefits and challenges of working in participatory ways with communities affected by violence.

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Designing Violence Prevention Interventions through Participatory Methods: Some Lessons

In an effort to capture practitioner reflections, this section outlines some lessons regarding participatory methods gleaned from CSVR's collaboration with the CWP. While every project and context is different, they may provide food for thought for other practitioners considering engaging with communities in a participatory manner.

Deciding on the level of participation

During the conceptualisation of each project or initiative, practitioners must decide what level of participation they are able and willing to pursue. One way of thinking about participation is as being on a continuum, with the relationship between practitioners and community members ranging from contractual to collegiate (Barreteau et al. 2010). In this framework, a contractual approach has practitioners designing and implementing the project, while informing community members about the process and inviting them to participate in activities or data collection, although not in the analysis of the issues. A consultative approach is similar to the contractual one, except that practitioners consult with key community members around local constraints, opportunities, and priorities in order to gain a deeper understanding of community dynamics. A collaborative approach, meanwhile, has practitioners working in tandem with community members and adjusting the project in response to their reflections, analyses of local issues, and proposed solutions. Finally, a collegiate approach sees practitioners and community members engaged in a long-term partnership, with the project driven primarily by community members, who collect data, analyse dynamics, and act on their findings and conclusions (Biggs 1989).

This continuum of participation can also be understood as ranging from shallow to deep (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995) or from narrow to wide (Farrington and Bebbington 1993), based on the degree of collaboration and inclusivity in the project. Such thinking is linked to Sherry Arnstein's (1969) early conceptualisation of the 'ladder of citizen participation' as leading from non-participation, through tokenism and up to citizen power. In practice, the level of participation does not remain set or reflect a linear progression towards greater participation, as participants play different roles and engage to different degrees in various phases of a project. Nonetheless, participatory methods work better when practitioners analyse the constraints and possibilities of an initiative in the conceptualisation stage and decide what kind of relationship they are able to build with participants ahead of time.

The CSVR project varied in terms of the level of participation as well as the diversity of stakeholders included in decision making. This variation was noted in the different phases of the project. For example, in developing the training materials, project time constraints in some cases reduced CSVR's relationships with CoGTA, CWP site managers and subject experts from the level of partnership to that of consultation. Furthermore, while the project aimed for responsibility to rest with CWP participants,

it could have included the participants in the development of the training materials or consulted rather than been informed by community members when conceptualising violence prevention activities.

Acknowledging time, resource, and capacity constraints

An acknowledged element of participatory methods is that they are time intensive (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Kindon, Pain and Kesby 2007). The more participatory a project is, the more time is needed for relationship building, dialogue, and the iterative 'action–reflection–action' process outlined by Freire (1994). Much of this process requires face-to-face meetings, which usually call for resources in the form of transport, catering, venue rentals, and materials, in addition to remuneration for practitioners' and participants' time, where applicable. Both CSVR staff and CWP participants were surprised by the amount of time required for meetings and other project activities. This occasionally presented a challenge, as CWP participants were only required to work on weekdays, six hours a day, eight days a month.

CSVR staff sought to meet with CWP participants twice a month and provided ideas for how participants could continue working with each other between these meetings. However, they noted that the project would have benefitted from weekly meetings, especially as most participants did not have easy access to the Internet to do research and mobile phone airtime to communicate questions or concerns when CSVR staff were not on site. CSVR staff also noted that the project was constrained by its short time frame and the need to produce deliverables, as funding only allowed about a year and a half for participants to develop and implement their interventions. The urgency of the project may have created a need among participants for frequent interactions and assurances from CSVR. A project spanning three to five years would have created more space for participants to develop their interventions independently, as well as to engage in collaborative and iterative learning—to reflect on and internalise what they had learned within the community and allow it to shape their actions.

Another issue to consider with participatory methods is staff capacity. Most importantly, practitioners and organisations need to ensure that the ratio of facilitators to participants is realistic, as a project requires not only facilitation but also administration and documentation. In addition, facilitators need to have a broad range of skills and experience to engage productively with participants. In the case of sensitive subject matter like violence—particularly in communities affected by widespread violence—practitioners also need to contain and address the emotions and trauma the subject might bring up. This may require specialised training or, as in the case of the CSVR project, greater human resource capacity, as staff might find it difficult to fulfil multiple roles (e.g., trainer, intervention facilitator, individual or group counsellor).

Designing the participatory methodology before proposal writing

As suggested by the previous point, participatory methods require planning ahead of time and should be conceptualised in such a way that the funding agreements supports and accounts for them. The consultative and collaborative approaches to participation, and especially the collegiate approach, necessitate early relationship- and trust-building, preferably ahead of project design, in order to address

the power discrepancies between practitioners and participants, and within the community itself. This includes identifying participants with whom practitioners can work in such a way that broader local needs are recognised and segments of the community are not marginalised or silenced (Kondrat and Julia 1997). For initiatives based on greater levels of participation, it can also assist with identifying participants who have shown an interest in and dedication to the issues and type of work central to the project, which require a significant time commitment from participants. While identifying CWP participants through site managers helped CSVR strengthen its relationships with these managers and met time constraints, staff noted that having relationships with participants ahead of time and then opening the project to volunteer participants may have resulted in more equal relationships between the practitioners and participants, and between the participants themselves, as well as greater commitment to the project among participants.

In addition, early engagement with community members, usually through informal conversations, helps practitioners grasp local dynamics and formulate a clearer idea of the context-specific problems the project could tackle. It also helps them identify potential obstacles to the project, on the one hand, and stakeholders, facilities, and resources that could assist with the project and the sustainability of its outcomes, on the other. Ultimately, early engagement makes for a more realistic project plan and funding agreements, with clearer objectives and a feasible set of activities and time frames. It also helps practitioners manage participants' and stakeholders' expectations of the project (Bergold and Thomas 2012).

In CSVR's case, while staff were familiar with the local context of the four CWP sites, they noted that the work would have benefitted from even broader stakeholder engagement before the start of activities. They also noted that stakeholders showed a greater stake in the sustainability of the resulting interventions when staff engaged them in early relationship building and project planning.

Applying a participatory approach to stakeholders

It follows from the above that if a project relies on certain community, civil society, or government stakeholders for successful implementation, longer-term sustainability, or uptake of findings, (particularly in the service of policy change), applying a participatory approach to these stakeholders might go further than using a consultative approach. Soliciting input and feedback on project design and materials is already a positive step towards building relationships and contextualising a project. Furthermore, involving the key stakeholders in collaborative project design and then in the process of developing interventions along with participants tends to increase their investment in project outcomes as well as their willingness to continue working with the participants after the project's end.

CSVR staff reported mixed experiences in terms of their engagements with stakeholders. Generally, it appeared that there were fewer barriers to most local or community- and faith-based organisations' involvement in stakeholder meetings and joint activities. For example, through stakeholder meetings in Tembisa, CWP participants were able to collaborate with a local school to develop class talks on substance abuse and school violence. There were also instances of CWP participants working with

representatives from the SAPS and community-based organisations in community walks or awareness raising. In Erasmus, CWP participants worked with a local out-patient substance abuse recovery centre on joint awareness raising as well as providing referrals. In some cases, however, both government officials and local organisations were unable to collaborate in developing a critical understanding of the selected intervention areas or designing joint activities. This appeared to be due to their workload and, in some instances, being frustrated by a perceived lack of joint activities, which often stemmed from the difficult process of reconciling the perspectives and challenges experienced by multiple stakeholders.

This suggests that involving the most crucial stakeholders as participants before and during a project can have lasting benefits in terms of increasing efficiency and impact, particularly after the project. If time and resource constraints or stakeholder reluctance mean that participatory methods cannot be applied to stakeholder relationships, then CSVR staff suggest spelling out the relationship in a memorandum of understanding or a set of participation guidelines. They also remain in regular contact with stakeholders via weekly or monthly phone calls, emails, or written reports (as appropriate), including after the end of the project in cases where the intended outcomes are still forthcoming.

Starting with a situational analysis

The deeper the level of participation, the greater the need for practitioners and participants to have a shared understanding of the problem they seek to address in the community. Depending on the degree of engagement they have with the community before the project, as well as the resources they have available to them, practitioners may consider conducting a situational analysis in collaboration with participants as the first activity of a project. While practitioners may come to the project with a question they seek to answer or a problem they seek to address, some form of situational analysis helps clarify how the community context and dynamics affect this problem for both practitioners and participants, encourage in-depth dialogue, and put them on the same page about what they are hoping to accomplish. This analysis can be done formally, for example, via a questionnaire administered by participants to a broad selection on community members, or informally, for example via conversations with community members or through participant observation. It could also provide a baseline for gauging attitude or behaviour change, and thus impact, across the project among community members, participants, stakeholders, and even practitioners.

Such a process could occur at the beginning (and, if relevant, at the end) of a project, or multiple times throughout the project in order to promote continuous 'action–reflection–action.' In the case of the CSVR project, staff noted that a situational analysis at the beginning of the project could have resulted in training that was more tailored to the particular challenges of each site and therefore created a better basis for dialogue and the development of interventions later in the project.

Developing tailored and accessible learning processes and materials

Whether a project involves formal training or dialogue- and reflection-based activities, a participatory approach calls for learning processes that are tailored to the context in which participants are seeking to make change. They should also build on the knowledge and practices of the participants and other

community members, as well as share information in an accessible manner. The higher the degree of participation, the more value there is in participants deciding on the topics they need to learn more about and what the objectives are of this learning, rather than the topics being imposed by practitioners or stakeholders. Processes that are rooted in local realities and that draw on local resources, particularly in cases where the groundwork laid out in the points above has been done, are likely to result in more locally responsive and targeted interventions. In addition, the processes need to be tailored to the types of activities to which participants are accustomed.

As detailed above, CSVR staff sought to achieve a balance between deductive and more engaging inductive and experiential learning processes. This included small and large group discussions, community mapping exercises, role play, forum theatre, personal reflections and testimonies. In reflecting on the training, staff recognised both strengths and challenges. Strengths included observations of great agency and a sense of pride or perhaps empowerment when participants discussed topics in small groups and their representatives shared these views with the larger group. In many instances, knowledge scaffolding and exchange occurred where overlaps or gaps were identified between the knowledge of participants and that of CSVR staff. The main challenge, meanwhile, was the duration of the training. While participants needed more time for discussion in some instances, in others they expressed fatigue, especially just after lunch. In reflecting on this, staff recognised that the participants were not accustomed to such training and that more variation could have been included between seated activities indoors and more physically involved activities outdoors. A second challenge related to the local or contextual applicability of some of the training materials - CSVR staff recognised that initial assumptions about content can be revised through situational analyses, stakeholder meetings, and community observations and conversations.

Finally, one of the benefits of tailored and accessible learning processes which are experiential and collaborative is that they can bring out each participant's unique skills and resources. Differences in areas of knowledge and in personality that individually might prove obstacles to effective interventions can become strengths for a group, as one person's organisational skills, another's writing skills, and still another's extensive social network are combined into a collective effort to meet a shared goal.

Emphasising regular reflection processes to facilitate monitoring and evaluation

As encapsulated by the 'action–reflection–action' approach, participatory methods benefit from regular reflection processes among both practitioners and participants, which serve to formalise learning from a project, facilitate dialogue and the sharing of information, and enable adjustments in response to new developments. Regular reflection also facilitates monitoring of how the project is progressing and evaluation of its impact on participants, other community members, and stakeholders.

CSVR staff adopted a reflection approach based in collaborative evaluation (O'Sullivan 2004), with all team members meeting regularly to debrief through formal and informal as well as individual and collective processes, which built on processes established in the first phase of the project (Brankovic 2016). They also used a developmental evaluation approach (Patton 2010), which allowed them to reflect

on the project and adjust it to accommodate unforeseen results, rather than stick to a predetermined schedule and set of outcomes without flexibility. The decision to undertake situational analyses is an example of an outcome of developmental evaluation. CSVR staff undertook regular reflection processes with participants, in addition to providing participants with the tools and experience to engage in their own reflection processes when the practitioners were not on site. These processes, which were in themselves often participatory, allowed those involved in the project to learn from each other and from unexpected developments and to improve subsequent activities.

Finally, CSVR endeavoured to evaluate the project and its impact on attitudes and behaviour by asking participants, stakeholders, and community members who took part in the interventions to fill out before and after questionnaires, as well as participate in focus groups and telephonic interviews, where possible.

Developing an exit strategy and ensuring sustainability

One of the main lessons from reflections on CSVR's collaboration with the CWP is that practitioners should develop an exit strategy in collaboration with participants. Even if practitioners intend to establish long-term relationships with participants and in a particular community, but especially if there is a good chance that funding will cover only a short-term project, they should discuss what effect their departure might have on interventions and how to account for it. Ideally, this would occur in the relationship-building stage before or as a project begins, when participants' expectations are first addressed. Practitioners might also assist participants with establishing a plan for ensuring the sustainability of the interventions. This might include, for example, training in fundraising and assisting participants with registering their group in order to facilitate fundraising.

In the case of the CSVR project, CWP participants were informed about the duration of the project, and CSVR staff often worked with participants to brainstorm ways of ensuring their interventions' sustainability. This involved discussing registration as a non-profit organisation, the development of cooperatives (joint micro enterprises), and providing and going through required documentation while ensuring that the participants had some level of responsibility in working towards these goals. Furthermore, staff and participants worked to establish connections with various stakeholders who could provide technical support as well as connections to referral and social networks in order to keep the interventions alive and relevant.

4 Conclusion

This report, which is based on the reflections of CSVR staff who collaborated with CWP participants to pilot new interventions, shares some of the practical lessons learnt from using participatory methods in violence prevention efforts. It points to some of the main challenges that are reflected in the literature on participatory approaches. These largely have to do with maintaining an equal relationship with participants that enables iterative and mutual learning, critical awareness, and the development of contextually relevant interventions in the face of manifold constraints. These constraints include short time frames, small budgets, limited practitioner capacity, uninterested stakeholders, sensitive topics, and unsupportive institutional and practitioner cultures. The report suggests practical considerations and steps to take to determine the level of participation that is possible and how to maintain it.

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