

# Costs and benefits of preventing violence

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Cost-benefit analyses have been undertaken in South Africa for infrastructure projects and other public services, but no such models exist for social benefit projects or programmes aimed at reducing the risk factors for crime and violence. This analysis shows that the benefits of community-based organisations' work to improve access to jobs and tertiary education, build social cohesion and boost local development far outweigh the costs.

## Key findings

- ▶ Cost-benefit analyses have been undertaken in South Africa for infrastructure projects such as water, roads and other public services. However, no such models exist for social benefit projects or programmes that seek to reduce the risk factors for crime and violence.
- ▶ There are many methodological, ethical and practical challenges to undertaking cost-benefit analyses of local social benefit programmes. The salaries of non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) employees are not benchmarked and are well below the levels of state employees or professionals in the formal sector. The value of volunteer time is hard to assess. And there is an inherent danger in monetising the intangible social benefits of these programmes – such as the development of trusting relationships between adults and children – because it reduces these interactions to transactions.
- ▶ The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) undertook research into violence-prevention-related programmes delivered by two community-based organisations (CBOs) in the Western Cape. By drawing on international literature, it was possible to provide an estimate of their cost-benefit ratio. This assessment shows that preventing violence and supporting community development yields tangible and intangible benefits to multiple stakeholders that outweigh the costs by more than 2:1.
- ▶ A key advantage of community-based prevention organisations is their adaptability in identifying and responding to the needs of the communities they serve as circumstances and contexts change.
- ▶ The estimated cost of delivering a range of services, from parenting support to after school care, and youth development by NGOs is under R7 000 a year per family served.
- ▶ The estimated cost of one trained parenting facilitator delivering four evidence-based parenting programmes for children aged 0 to 18 is R967.80 per family.

## Recommendations

- ▶ The Department of Social Development, National Treasury and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation are encouraged to consider how CBOs could be better supported by the state. They should also identify and collect more rigorous data and costing information to enable the tracking of achievements against the national development goals.
- ▶ CBOs and researchers are encouraged to collaborate to replicate and undertake further cost-benefit assessments for evidence-based preventive community interventions. This will contribute to the growing body of knowledge and further support such interventions.
- ▶ Philanthropic donors and development partners should consider using the findings and data in this report to inform their decisions about how community-based prevention interventions can be supported and sustained.
- ▶ National Treasury and the departments of social development, basic education and health are advised to partner with experts to develop a benchmark for funding CBOs.

## Benefits of prevention

South Africa's future development, including recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, is dependent on the creation of safety and stability. It also relies on overcoming the spatial and economic inequality that has remained stubbornly entrenched, and resistant to intervention, since 1994.<sup>1</sup>

In this report, we build on key findings from ISS research conducted in 2020 to document the tangible and intangible benefits of CBOs as 'resource hubs' in low-income communities.<sup>2</sup> The research showed that these organisations were established to keep children and young people safe, reduce the risk factors for violence, and support education and skills development. However, their impact and the benefits to communities and families go well beyond this.

This report uses two CBOs, Net vir Pret and Seven Passes Initiative,<sup>3</sup> as case studies. We show that the benefits of their services for communities and individuals are likely to far outweigh the costs, while making a significant contribution to national development.

## Assessment challenges

Cost-benefit analyses of key interventions may seem a promising way to demonstrate the economic value of violence prevention.<sup>4</sup> However, they also present many methodological, ethical and practical challenges, especially in South Africa. Among these is the difficulty of monetising intangible outcomes, particularly when these may be related to social and emotional development and other non-cognitive skills.

Predicting costs of non-intervention (to the health system, criminal justice system and in state grants) may also be problematic, as may assessing the value of the contribution of volunteer time.<sup>5</sup> These factors, along with the ethical problem with monetising social goods (such as building trusting relationships) mean that such assessments should be approached with caution.

In community-based interventions, the challenge is exacerbated by the absence of reliable, long-term data on the number of families and individuals impacted by services over time. CBOs are not research institutions, but are focused on implementation. While both researched organisations try in various ways to keep

track of the outcomes of their work, data are insufficient to reliably cost the benefits.

Furthermore, the salaries of people who work for CBOs are not benchmarked (i.e. there is no national guide for salaries for NGO staff, and these salaries vary according to organisations' ability to pay staff). NGO salaries are well below those of state employees.

CBOs that are solely or predominantly funded by philanthropic donors and through once-off or ongoing contributions from individuals and businesses, work with what they have. They often do not have predictable and reliable sources of income for more than six to 12 months. Thus, any estimation of costs from their existing budgets would be an undervaluation.

*It's difficult to monetise intangible outcomes, particularly those relating to social and emotional development*

Nonetheless, what will become apparent from the data below is that preventing violence and supporting community development yields many tangible and intangible benefits for the community, families and individuals. These benefits are far greater than the operating costs of the CBOs.

In a nutshell, prevention is a two- or three-for-one deal. Keeping children safe through supervised afternoon activities also creates an early warning system, because children form relationships with their adult caregivers, share their problems and concerns, and find solutions. And there are benefits when parents attend a parenting programme or receive a home visit from parenting programme facilitators.

These activities are opportunities to impart parenting-related information and skills, provide emotional support, pick up developmental or health problems early and help with breastfeeding. They also ensure that caregivers are able, and supported, to access child support grants. Furthermore, these organisations have become skilled in accessing and using volunteer networks to bolster services for healthcare, psychosocial support and skills building, which increase social networks and grow social capital.

A key advantage of community-based prevention, as [documented](#) by the ISS,<sup>6</sup> is the organisations' ability to identify and respond to the needs of the communities they serve and to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances and contexts. This was clearly demonstrated with the onset of COVID-19 in 2020 and the resultant restrictions on movement, trade and schooling, which negatively affected both formal and informal employment and food security.

During level 4 and 5 lockdowns, the organisations could not offer their services fully, but adapted some (e.g. taking materials and homework to children and providing parenting support through WhatsApp). Both organisations also supported community-wide food security innovatively. This kind of flexibility is rarely possible for state institutions and demonstrates the value of partnerships between the state and NGOs that provide social welfare.

### Costs and benefits of community-based interventions

Below is a summary of the contribution of the two CBOs to individuals and families in their communities.

#### Seven Passes Initiative

Seven Passes Initiative in the Western Cape was started in 2008 in response to youth gang violence. It began by introducing afterschool education for young people in Touwsrante, Hoekwil and surrounding farming communities.

Touwsrante is a small rural community outside George. Its location and demographics reflect South Africa's apartheid past. The Touwsrante community has a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking 'coloured' population, with the surrounding informal settlement home to a mostly isi-Xhosa-speaking population. Poverty and unemployment are rife, as are alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Touwsrante borders more affluent, predominantly white Hoekwil.

The organisation serves around 2 500 people (based on the StatsSA census figures of 2011).

#### Net vir Pret

Net vir Pret started in 2002 as an afterschool activity in the Barrydale/Swellendam municipality, in the Overberg region of the Western Cape. It set out to provide a constructive and creative outlet to keep young children safe and away from risky behaviours.

It was formally established in 2004 through the efforts of two local residents, both passionate about youth development and concerned about the vulnerability of young people in Barrydale. Staff, comprising full-time and part-time members and interns, all live in Barrydale. The board of trustees consists of individuals who live and own businesses in the more-resourced parts of the town.

According to StatsSA, Barrydale has a population of around 4 100.<sup>7</sup>



US PROGRAMME COSTS  
ARE MUCH HIGHER  
THAN NGO-DELIVERED  
PROGRAMMES IN SA

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**Chart 1: Direct services provided by Net vir Pret and Seven Passes Initiative**

Net vir Pret	Seven Passes Initiative
Afterschool educational support	Afterschool educational support
Early childhood development support	In-school teacher support
Arts and drama	Provision of meals for children and families
Mentorship and skills training	Work experience and skills training for school-leavers
Holiday programme and youth camps	Delivery of four evidence-based parenting programmes
	Linking youth with opportunities for tertiary education and work
	Psychosocial support through a referral system

Source: Penny Parenzee and authors

**Chart 2: Direct benefits of the service**

Intervention/ programme	Benefits
Afterschool care programmes and school-holiday programmes	<p>Lays the foundation for better school achievement and for children to take advantage of opportunities later in life by:<sup>8</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing school drop-out rate</li> <li>• Alleviating family stress and conflict</li> <li>• Minimising the likelihood of violence and victimisation of violence<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Improving nutrition (and therefore, concentration on educational tasks)</li> <li>• Increasing the number of school-leavers accessing tertiary education and job opportunities</li> <li>• Improving career choices</li> <li>• Improving educational outcomes (including reading for meaning) and matric results</li> <li>• Enabling access to tertiary education and trade- and industry-related opportunities</li> <li>• Increasing emotional awareness and regulation, and reducing conflict and violence</li> <li>• Broadening the social and economic networks of learners<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Improving attitudes to learning</li> <li>• Reducing risk-taking behaviour<sup>11</sup></li> </ul> <p>Contributes to social transformation and early problem identification and resolution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the opportunity gap between resourced and under-resourced learners</li> <li>• Improving access to resources such as computers and internet for learners, their families and other community members to create CVs, apply for jobs, search and access opportunities</li> </ul>
Home-visiting infant attachment programmes	Improves quality of mother-infant relationship and security of infant attachment, factors favourable to child development <sup>12</sup>

Intervention/ programme	Benefits
Parenting for lifelong health (PLH) for young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing child maltreatment, including physical and emotional abuse, and neglect, and endorsement of capital punishment</li> <li>• Correcting dysfunctional parenting and child behaviour problems</li> <li>• Increasing daily positive parenting, and</li> <li>• Improving parental self-efficacy<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>
PLH for teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreasing abuse and corporal punishment</li> <li>• Improving positive parenting, involvement and monitoring</li> <li>• Reducing adult and child substance abuse</li> <li>• Alleviating parental stress and depression</li> <li>• Minimising parental endorsement of corporal punishment, and</li> <li>• Lowering financial stress<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>
PLH for toddlers (also known as 'book-sharing')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing language development<sup>15</sup></li> <li>• Improving concentration and attention (important for school readiness)<sup>16</sup></li> <li>• Promoting positive parenting, while addressing<sup>17</sup> harsh parenting and child conduct problems</li> <li>• Reducing child maltreatment – including physical and emotional abuse – neglect, dysfunctional parenting, child behaviour problems and endorsement of corporal punishment</li> <li>• Increasing daily positive parenting, and</li> <li>• Improving parental self-efficacy<sup>18</sup></li> </ul>

Source: authors

The only programme run by the organisations that has been subjected to a cost-benefit study is PLH teen. The input cost to prevent each case of abuse was R12 007.52 (calculated at an exchange rate of R20.54 to the British pound).<sup>19</sup> Savings per case were R44,615.40 (excluding potential costs for foster care, court and prolonged child protection management).<sup>20</sup> Thus, the programme showed a massive return on investment – a cost-benefit ratio of 1:3.7.

In 2021, economists at Cornerstone Economic Research developed a costing model for the delivery of the PLH for young children programme. Annual operating costs were determined at R1 221 200 when there are five parenting facilitators (as at the Seven Passes Initiative).<sup>21</sup>

However, this organisation has shown that, with the right training and support, those five staff members can deliver all four parenting programmes. At the same salary cost, they also provide training to young people who work at the organisation for 12 months on an extended public works grant from the Department of Community Safety. The trainees may not yet be parents, but they learn parenting skills and are enabled to work more effectively and non-violently with children who attend the aftercare programmes.

Annually, one facilitator could reach 20 mothers through home visits, 80 families each with the young children and teen programmes, 160 families with book-sharing and 15 youngsters working with children. This translates into a cost of R967.80 per family, per year.

## Cost of full service delivery

The charts in Appendix 1 provide a detailed breakdown of the 2021 annual budgets for Net vir Pret and Seven Passes Initiative, and an estimated cost per household served. The cost per household is based on the number of children who attend the programmes. It does not include people visiting the offices for advice, to use the facilities or computers, or who receive food at the soup kitchens supported by the organisations. Thus, the per capita costs are lower than presented here.

The annual operating cost of Net vir Pret is R2 201 700, at R5 504 per family (based on a conservative estimate of the number of families reached). The annual operating costs of Seven Passes Initiative are R2 707 494, and the cost per family/individual R6 768.64.

## What cost-benefit models show

Cost-benefit analyses have been done in South Africa for water,<sup>22</sup> roads<sup>23</sup> and other public services<sup>24</sup> projects, but not for social projects or programmes seeking to reduce crime and violence risks. Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation<sup>25</sup> and Save the Children SA<sup>26</sup> estimates reveal the burden that costs of violence against women and children place on services, the fiscus and survivors, life opportunities. While a paucity of data prevents a cost-benefit analysis of all components of community-based violence prevention interventions, United States and United Kingdom data indicate the scale of savings and benefits.

A plethora of evidence-based programmes and services available in Washington has been subject to cost-benefit analyses.<sup>27</sup> Few of these compare with the offerings of South African CBOs. However, three United States programmes are sufficiently similar to the Seven Passes Initiative parenting programmes and both organisations' youth development services to show that the benefits outweigh the costs.

The costs of NGO programmes to prevent violence are under R7 000 per family, per year

The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)<sup>28</sup> compares to the Thula Sana home-visiting programme in that both are evidence-based<sup>29</sup> and involve regular visits by professionals to pregnant women during pregnancy and after birth. Both programmes support mothers from low-income households and promote a positive relationship between infant and parent. The goals of the two programmes are similar, but differ in emphasis as shown in Chart 3 below.

Two significant differences between the programmes are likely to have an impact on both costs and benefits: NFP visits continue until the infant is two years old, whereas Thula Sana visits end when the infant is six months old. This will reduce the costs of delivering the latter (and could reduce the benefits). In addition, Thula Sana is

Chart 3: Comparison between the goals of NFP and Thula Sana

Nurse-Family Partnership <sup>30</sup>	Thula Sana (PLH for infants) <sup>31</sup>
<p>NFP aims to improve pregnancy outcomes by promoting good preventive health practices, including thorough prenatal care from healthcare providers, improved diet and reduced use of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal substances.</p> <p>It also intends to improve child health and development by helping parents provide responsible and competent care. Finally, it improves the economic self-sufficiency of the family by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.</p>	<p>PLH for infants provides an emotionally supportive relationship to mothers in late pregnancy and through the early postpartum weeks and months. This home-visiting programme combines counselling with assessment of individual and interpersonal characteristics of the baby, and with strategies for good infant care and parent-infant relationships.</p>

Source: authors

delivered by trained community members (lay staff) and not professional nurses. This lowers costs, but again could diminish impact by preventing access to state services that a nurse could facilitate and to the advice and support a parenting facilitator could provide.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) NFP cost-benefit analysis found that while the costs included hiring nurses, training and related activities, outcomes included:

- Reduced child welfare and victim costs
- Lower criminal justice costs, and
- Savings in public assistance and healthcare.

Educational achievement of both mothers and children increased. The programme produced a net benefit of R255 357 (US\$17 000)<sup>32</sup> per family (see Chart 2). The benefit-to-cost ratio was 2.73 and the return on investment 8%.<sup>33</sup> Chart 4 demonstrates the method used to calculate the benefits.

The Triple-P Positive Parenting Programme compares with PLH for young children. Both are evidence-based group initiatives that develop in parents skills to cope with children's difficult behaviour. WSIPP analysed level 4 Triple P for families with very disruptive children. PLH

for young children (Sinovuyo Kids) is not specifically for such children, but has been delivered to parents who have children with difficult behaviour. Both programmes provide more than eight sessions. At US\$530 (R8 126.07) per participant, the costs are more than five times lower than the value of the benefits, which are calculated at US\$3 116 (R47 775).<sup>34</sup>

Nurse-family home visiting programmes have a 2.73:1 cost benefit ratio and a return of investment of 8%

Another study shows that costs for population-wide delivery of effective parenting programmes could be recovered in one year by as little as a 10% reduction in the rate of abuse and neglect.<sup>35</sup> Benefits include fewer child abuse cases, foster care placements, hospitalisations from abuse injuries and emotional and behavioural problems in children. Parental stress and depression were lowered and corporal punishment rates dropped – all pointing to better child outcomes.

Finally, a programme offering case management for low-income individuals or those on state grants was

Chart 4: Return on investment for NFP, Washington

Benefits per family			Main source of benefits
Reduced child abuse and neglect	\$1 096	R16 670.16	Lower CW and victim costs
Increased education attainment (child and mother)	\$24 131	R367 032.51	Increased earnings
Reduced crime (child and mother)	\$5 333	R81 114.93	Lower CJ and victim costs
Increased K-12 costs	-\$1 738	-R36 434.98	Higher K-12 costs
Other	\$2 854	R43 409.34	Public assistance, healthcare \$
Deadweight cost of programme	-\$4 933	-R75 943.53	
<b>Total benefits per family</b>	<b>\$26 743</b>	<b>R406 761.21</b>	
<b>Costs per family</b>	<b>\$9 788</b>	<b>R148 723.38</b>	
<b>Net benefits (NPV)</b>	<b>\$16 956</b>	<b>R257 909.28</b>	= \$2.73 B/C = 8% ROI
Note: B/C = benefit/cost; CJ = criminal justice; CW = child welfare; NPV = net present value; ROI = return on investment			

Source: Aos, 2013



**Chart 5: Cost-benefit analysis of case management programme for low-income individuals**

Benefit-cost summary statistics per participant					
Benefits to:					
Taxpayers	\$273	R4 152.33	Benefits minus cost	(\$4 094)	R62 269.74
Participants	\$206	R3 133.26	Benefit to cost ratio	(\$0.32)	R4.87
Others	\$0	R0	Chance the programme will produce benefits greater than costs	16%	
Indirect	(\$1 469)	R22 343.49			
<b>Total benefits</b>	<b>(\$990)</b>	<b>R15 057.90</b>			
<b>Net programme cost</b>	<b>(\$3 105)</b>	<b>R47 227.05</b>			
Benefits minus cost	(\$4 094)	R62 269.74			

Source: Washington State Institute for Public Policy: <https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/582>

assessed. Here, case managers help work seekers and may refer individuals for further education and training. The service is delivered by NGOs or by profit-driven companies.<sup>36</sup> This is comparable to the services offered to young people by Seven Passes Initiative and Net vir Pret. The net programme cost for this intervention is calculated to be R47 227.05 (US\$3 105),<sup>37</sup> while benefit value is estimated at R62 269.74 (US\$4 094). The costs of US-based programmes are vastly higher than NGO-delivered programmes in South Africa.

## Conclusion

While reasons abound to be sceptical of the accuracy and ethics of cost-benefit analyses of local social development programmes, data suggest that return on investment of good-quality programmes and services is excellent. This is sufficient reason for National Treasury

and the social development, basic education and health departments to collaborate to determine how organisations can be sustainably resourced, in the interests of national development.

Developing a workable method of subsidising the kinds of organisations profiled here is challenging. However, experts should be sought to assist, in consultation with CBOs, to develop a funding benchmark.

## Acknowledgements

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## Appendix 1: Organisational operating costs

Chart 1: Annual operating costs of Net vir Pret showing per capita costs for beneficiaries

Activities include holiday school, aftercare, creative development programmes, homework club and career guidance		
Costs		
Cost items	Annual costs	Notes
Salaries: Full-time	R1 129 600	10 full-time staff; director @ R15 206/month
Part-time	R 276 500	Three part-time tutors @ R250/hour
Interns	R 39 600	Five intern stipends @ R2 000/month
Volunteers	R 120 000	Seven volunteers – time priced @ R375/day
<b>Total</b>	<b>R1 565 700</b>	
Building maintenance	R 50 000	
Materials (stationery, instruments, crafting material)	R 218 500	
Computers	R 22 500	
Rates and electricity	R 20 000	
Food	R 70 000	
Vehicle maintenance	R 25 000	
Fuel	R 80 000	
Insurance	R 40 000	
Telephone	R 45 000	
Accounting/auditing/banking charges	R 60 000	
Training	R 5 000	
<b>Total budget</b>	<b>R2 201 700</b>	
<b>Number of beneficiaries per year</b>	400 rural youngsters and their families	
<b>Total per household/child per year</b>	R 5 504	

Chart 2: Annual operating costs of Seven Passes Initiative showing per capita costs for beneficiaries

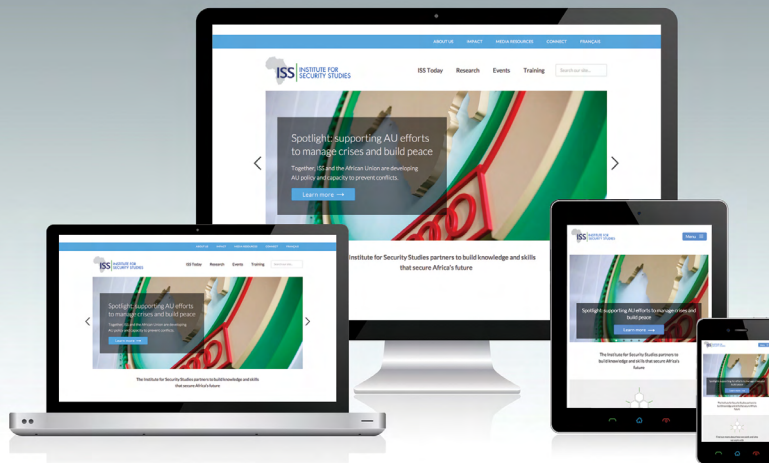
Activities include afterschool and educational programme, early childhood development and positive parenting, social activation, youth development programme, monitoring and evaluation		
Costs		
Cost items	Annual costs	Notes
Salaries	R1 787 542	Seven full-time staff: highest salary R11 750, lowest, R2 500, is paid to the cook, who works half day Director's salary R31 100 per month
Rent	R 73 776	
Materials (stationery, instruments, crafting material, security)	R 79 500	
Computers	R 25 440	An underestimation, as computers have to be renewed every four years
Electricity	R 21 624	
Food and gas	R 264 449	Children and parents who attend parenting programmes and aftercare receive a cooked meal
Vehicle maintenance	R 6 000	Annual cost of the vehicle maintenance plan
Transport/fuel	R 36 798	To provide programmes in the district
Supervisors (outsourced)	R 63 600	Two supervisors – an education expert and an occupational therapist trained on the parenting programmes – once a week for two hours
Insurance	R 28 993	
Telephone and Internet	R 13 483	Includes data for staff on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis
Accounting/auditing/ bank charges	R 131 341	Includes the services of a financial consultant and monthly pay-as-you-earn
Training	R 58 296	The organisation would like to increase this allocation
Projects (holiday programmes, afterschool)	R 71 280	Amount allocated by the Department of Social Development, but the organisation usually spends more
Travel (to attend meetings and conferences)	R 45 372	Amount allocated by a donor, but the organisation spent less than this in 2020/21
<b>Total budget</b>	R2 707 494	
<b>Number of beneficiaries per year</b>	235 primary- and 65 high-school learners and their families, totalling 100 families	
<b>Total per household/child per year</b>	R 6 768.73	

## Notes

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