

CONCEPT NOTE:

Peace and Security Practitioner's Dialogue

Theme: Peace Begins in the Community: Local Solutions for Lasting Security in KwaZulu-Natal

Violence remains a critical and persistent challenge in many communities across South Africa. The **Quarter 1 Crime Statistics for 2024** reflect a troubling escalation in violent incidents, with cases involving threats with a weapon rising from 57% in 2023 to 62% in 2024 (Comins, 2024). The province of **KwaZulu-Natal** has been particularly affected, marked by heightened insecurity and criminal activity that place residents' lives and well-being at significant risk. The threats facing communities in KwaZulu-Natal—and South Africa more broadly—are multifaceted. They include the impacts of **climate and environmental change**, the **proliferation of drug and human trafficking**, the prevalence of **general criminality**, and the ongoing scourge of **sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**. Additional social challenges, such as the growing incidence of **witchcraft-related practices and mutilation**, the increasing number of **street children and rising levels of homelessness**, and the rise of **taxi and political violence**, further compound the instability. These forms of violence not only erode personal and communal safety but also undermine trust, cohesion, and development at all levels of society.

Critically, these violent phenomena are deeply embedded within structural issues such as **inequality, poverty, unemployment**, and broader **socioeconomic vulnerabilities**. Recent statistics underscore the magnitude of these challenges. According to **Stats South Africa (2025)**, **62.4% of young people aged 15–24** is unemployed, with the unemployment rate among those aged 25–34 reaching **40.4%**. Additionally, the **World Population Review (2025)** reports that approximately **55% of the population** live below the national poverty line. Food insecurity has reached alarming levels; the **Human Sciences Research Council** (Makhanya, 2024) noted a significant rise in 2024. Furthermore, the **General Household Survey (2024)** by **Statistics South Africa** revealed that **14 million people**—out of the country's estimated 63 million—went to bed hungry in 2024 (South African Government, 2025).

To address these intersecting challenges effectively, ongoing **critical reflection and analysis** are essential. This includes understanding the linkages among various social ills, and crafting **holistic, sustainable responses**. While much research has documented the societal

impacts of violence, there remains a pressing need for **continuous dialogue, collaborative action**, and the **formulation of adaptive strategies**. Preventing violence and building peace requires more than policy and law enforcement—it demands a concerted effort to transform the **values, behaviours, and attitudes** that normalize and perpetuate violence in homes, schools, and communities. Violence disrupts not only immediate safety but also long-term trust, productivity, education, economic growth, and public health.

This dialogue is grounded in the belief that **solutions must begin at the community level**, where the most vulnerable are located. A **grassroots approach**—involving educators, parents, local government, youth, children, faith-based organizations, and community-based groups—is imperative. Grassroots and community-based organisations operate at the frontlines and possess valuable insights into the lived realities of affected communities. Their contributions are essential for developing effective, long-term strategies that address both the symptoms and root causes of violence and insecurity. It convenes representatives from diverse sectors and organisations to engage in critical and informed discussions on the evolving nature of current and emerging threats to peace and security within the province. The objective is to collaboratively develop relevant and context-specific responses aimed at fostering nonviolent communities, preventing crime, promoting a culture of peace, and ensuring the safety and security of individuals. The dialogue seeks to examine the various forms of violence impacting individuals, groups, and communities, while also exploring the complexities and challenges involved in rebuilding safe and secure neighbourhoods.

Discussions will focus on identifying areas in need of reform, opportunities for transformation, and practical pathways toward achieving sustainable peace and community safety. Presentations and conversations will highlight effective and sustainable solutions across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons. In addition, participants will critically reflect on the successes and limitations of existing interventions, with a focus on identifying persistent gaps and proposing necessary changes or innovations. The sessions will also explore the essential skills, tools, and programmes required to address these issues effectively. Emphasis will be placed on the roles and responsibilities of communities, local leaders, and community-based organisations in driving meaningful change and fostering resilient, secure, and inclusive environments. Over the course of two days, this forum will bring together key stakeholders to **exchange knowledge, identify best practices, and formulate actionable recommendations**. The goal is to foster an inclusive dialogue that centers community voices and builds collective capacity for peace, safety, and resilience.

This two-day programme will conclude with the development and publication of four policy briefs, each outlining key solutions and identifying relevant stakeholders critical to driving meaningful change. The primary objective is to formulate actionable policy recommendations that support joint action and foster collaboration across sectors. These policy briefs will be widely disseminated to a broad range of stakeholders to inform decision-making and encourage coordinated responses to the challenges discussed.

This two-day dialogue brings together representatives from academia, community-based organisations, and grassroots practitioners actively engaged in local interventions and programmes. The dialogue will adopt a participatory approach, incorporating a blend of presentations, facilitated discussions, and interactive question-and-answer sessions.

Participants will collectively reflect on the state of insecurity in KwaZulu-Natal and explore practical solutions and coordinated actions to address these pressing challenges. The sessions will encourage active contributions from both participants and panelists, fostering meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange.

The dialogue will take place July 22 - 23, 2025 at the Coastlands Hotel (Musgrave) 315-319 Peter Mokaba Ridge, Musgrave, Durban.

This dialogue is organized by the International Centre of Nonviolence (ICON) at the Durban University of Technology. The mission of the Centre is to promote peace, justice and nonviolence in teaching, research and community engagement by developing skills and knowledge, using participatory and collaborative processes, embracing Ubuntu, ethical and spiritual values and nurturing spaces for meaningful encounter. Its core values are empathy, integrity, optimism, trust, and solidarity.

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