

# The HSRC/NRF Engaged Research Conference

22 - 24 October 2025, Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre, Gauteng



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**Workshop topic:** Building effective partnerships between researchers, government, and NGOs for human prosperity: Lessons from the National Violence Prevention Forum

**Link to publication:** [Lessons for multisectoral collaboration to prevent violence](#)

## Background

Researchers cannot deliver impact alone—they must collaborate across sectors. Often, when sectors come together, it is in conferences or workshops. In these settings, ‘experts’ and people in positions of power (usually those hosting the event) hold the floor, leaving little space for a real understanding of complex social problems, like violence, to emerge. We need to shift how we engage across different sectors.

In a context of increasing complexity and misinformation, how can we foster and sustain partnerships between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to achieve evidence-informed systems change?

Since 2015, the Violence Prevention Forum (VPF) has maintained ongoing dialogue and facilitated collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. The VPF serves as a platform for knowledge sharing, collective problem solving, and relationship building across sectors. Through the VPF meetings, evidence and practice-based knowledge have informed policy and funding for violence prevention interventions in South Africa, leading to the scale-up of evidence-informed parenting programmes in a province.

In 2023, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) conducted case study research to understand what motivated researchers, government officials, and NGOs to participate in the VPF and what enabled the change we saw.

Collaboration requires a foundation of trust. Findings from the case studies showed that multisectoral collaborations that bring civil society practitioners together with other sectors perceived to have more power, such as government, research institutions and donors, must avoid reinforcing power inequalities by giving more space for presentations to researchers or government officials.

This workshop will demonstrate the interactive VPF dialogical methodology, which prioritises active listening, building empathy, and collective sense-making. Participants will sit in a circle, share knowledge, and engage in a reflective conversation on the challenges that stand in the way of multisectoral collaboration, without any PowerPoint presentations. Drawing on the lessons from the VPF, the workshop participants will discuss how these challenges can be overcome individually or collectively.

Participants will leave with deeper insights into the current challenges faced by researchers, practitioners and policymakers that stand in the way of collaboration and how to innovate and

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overcome them. They will also leave having experienced how workshop dialogue can be done differently.

## Objectives and Expected Outcomes

### Workshop Goals:

- To reflect on the kind of partnerships we need between researchers, NGOs, and the government to achieve human security and prosperity.
- To share lessons from the VPF, a platform that brings together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to support evidence-informed violence prevention work in South Africa.
- To hear and learn from others' experiences of multisectoral collaboration across sectors.

### Expected Workshop Outcomes:

- Participants gain insight into the barriers and enablers of effective collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and NGOs.
- Participants experience an alternative, dialogue-based workshop approach that encourages active listening, empathy, and collective sense-making.
- Participants leave with connections and practical ideas on how to strengthen partnerships.