

# Domestic Violence Prevention in Gauteng, South Africa

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## Abstract

A review of literature revealed a gap in research on effective ways to promote domestic violence prevention strategies in the region on the outskirts of Johannesburg, South Africa, where unofficial settlements are being built near established communities and contributing to the problem. This case study used purposeful sampling of eight key informants in a prevention program designed to both implement strategies to prevent domestic violence and assist those who have experienced violent acts.

## Problem

Domestic violence is an ongoing issue in South Africa (Maree, 2002; Smith, 2013; Van der Hoven, 2001). Approximately 1.2 million households in South Africa currently live in informal settlements, under conditions that pose a threat to the health, safety, and security of residents (Ziblim, 2013, Stats South Africa, 2012). The increase in informal settlements being created close to developed communities can add to instances of such violence (Ravallion, Chen & Sangraula, 2007; Tshikotshi, 2009; Ziblim, 2013).

Villagers in Gauteng province near Johannesburg, South Africa, local government officials, and local and international non-profit organizations created the People Against Abuse program to address domestic violence, encourage people to report incidents of violence, and work to change the culture of ignoring domestic violence incidents.

The program incorporated a multifaceted approach, including community outreach, creating a separate hotline at the police department for people to call for assistance, accompanying patients to the hospital or court as needed, home visits, and 24-hour on-call counselors.

## Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to assess how well the program had an impact on reporting of domestic violence incidents and changed the culture of acceptance of such violence.

## Relevant Literature

Much has been written about

- **the expansion of informal settlements** (World Bank, 2009; Ziblim, 2013)
- **the conditions in South African informal settlements** (Ravallion, Chen & Sangraula, 2007; Tshikotshi, 2009; UN Habitat, 2010; Ziblim, 2013) and
- **crime and domestic violence** in South Africa (Maree, 2002; Smith, 2013; Van der Hoven, 2001).

There is also significant literature on **the relationship between police and informal settlers** (Cropley, 2014; Huchzermeyer, 2010; Smith, 2013; South African Police Service, 2014). However, research on programs that effectively address the overlapping nature of these issues in the Johannesburg region is lacking .



## Limitations

Limitations include time and open and honest responses from participants. The small sample may not be representative of all regions in South Africa. This study is specific only to the region in the Gauteng province surrounding Johannesburg.

## Research Questions

What are participants' perceptions of the People Against Abuse program?

How has the program affected relationships between the residents and police?

How have residents' perception of the acceptance of domestic violence changed since the program was implemented?

How have residents made use of the components of the program?

## Procedures

Purposeful sample of eight key informant interviewees (People Against Abuse program project manager, village leaders, police inspector, program clients).

General interview guide with open ended questions allowed for follow-up questions and clarification.

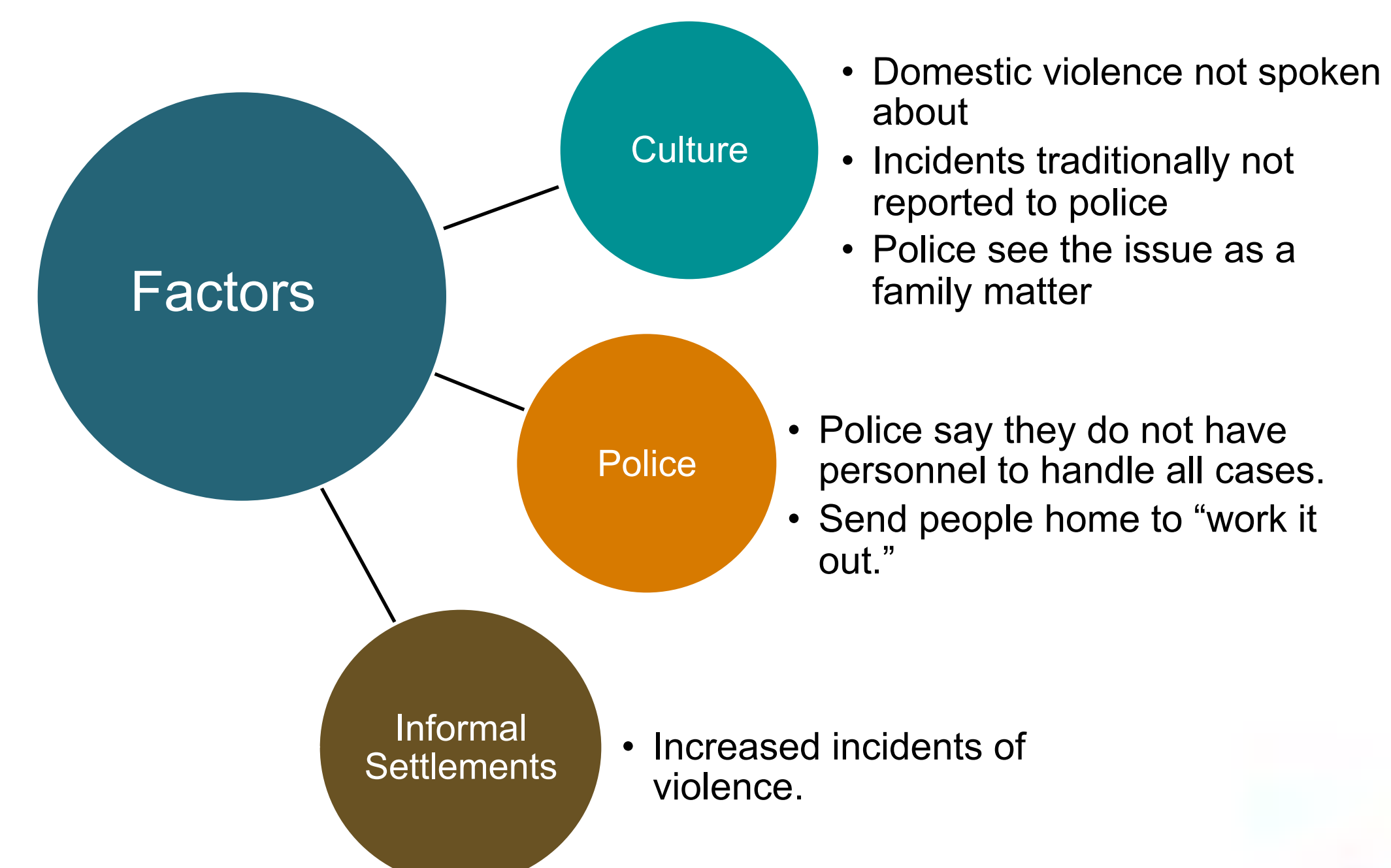
Site visit to community, program office, and local police station.

## Data Analysis

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with participants and observations were analyzed both inductively and through coded outlines to look for patterns regarding attitudes about domestic violence, the People Against Abuse program, and the relationship between residents and police.

Identification of themes

NVivo 9 was used for data organization and coding



## Findings

### Perceptions of the People Against Abuse Program

- Residents and police reported a more cooperative relationship as a result of the program.

### Impact on Relationships between Residents and Police

- Residents reported increased sense of trust in police.
- Police reported the program helped them, as program participants can respond to incidents police do not have personnel to handle.

### Impact on Perceptions of the Domestic Violence

- Community members say they feel empowered to report incidents of violence.
- Villagers said they feel empowered to let the company know their concerns.

### How Residents Made Use of the Program

- Residents said the counseling program helped them.
- Clients said it was helpful when program leaders accompanied them to the hospital and court. It helped them feel empowered.
- Police and program personnel reported an increase in reports of domestic violence; increase in orders of protection; increase in arrests of perpetrators.

## Conclusions

Cooperation and trust between stakeholders in Gauteng increased as a result of the People Against Abuse program. Participating in the program allowed participants to open a dialog about domestic violence, offer assistance to those affected, and impact police perception about the severity of the issue.

## Social Change Implications

This study provides insight into the participants' attitudes and perceptions about the People Against Abuse program and some of the challenges they face in changing the culture of acceptance of domestic violence. Results of the study suggest strategies that could be implemented in other regions with similar concerns about domestic violence.