

iii. Perpetrator Programmes

Perpetrator programmes have been identified as a key strategy by organisations working in the area of gender-based violence. It is also one of the most complex and contentious areas of work. Some organisations work with perpetrators in a more general way and others work with them through the criminal justice system.

The following examples include work with men who have entered the criminal justice system.

National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO)

BACKGROUND

NICRO is a national organisation focusing on the issues of crime and crime prevention. Their programmes include offender reintegration, community victim support, diversion and youth development and economic opportunities. The organisation started in 1910 as the South African Prisoners' Aid Association, and was renamed NICRO (the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders) in 1970. NICRO employs 240 staff, and has close to 600 volunteers.

NICRO runs a range of programmes, many of which have been in existence for a number of years, such as NICRO's Victim Support Programme, the goal of which is to ensure that the rights of victims of crime in South Africa are met through the development of sustainable, needs-based victim support services and projects. NICRO as an organisation has worked in the field of domestic violence intervention for the past 18 years.

As part of its activities, NICRO hosted a Victimology Conference in July 2004. This conference allowed practitioners in the field to share experiences. NICRO staffers also presented a paper at an international conference in 2003, outlining NICRO's activities.

NICRO's thinking around interventions with men in gender-based violence began in 2001. Having been involved in the domestic violence field for over 16 years, NICRO began to question the efficacy of working only with women when tackling gender-based violence. They also noted that there were hardly any organisations to refer male perpetrators to. They began to search for a more holistic and comprehensive approach to domestic violence in South Africa – an approach that addressed not only the symptoms of violence, but also the underlying causes and contributory factors. NICRO believed that some of these root causes included: stereotyped socialisation which emphasises issues of power and control; unresolved trauma and abuse from the apartheid era that bred inequality and powerlessness; poverty; lack of peaceful conflict resolution options; and apathy from communities which leads to tolerance of violent behaviour.

NICRO's work over the past 16 years had also enabled the organisation to understand the realities of abusive relationships. As Venessa Padayachee, National Programme Manager: Community Victim Support, says,

The harsh reality is that many victims do not leave the perpetrator or often return to the abusive relationship. Those that do leave have to deal with the crises of moving out of the home, into shelters or having no place to go, supporting children and becoming financially independent. While the women are left to face these crises, the abuser often goes on to other relationships and the violence starts again, this time with a different victim. The burden of dealing with the abuse and its effects is placed on the victim and it is unacceptable that we continue to deal with domestic violence prevention in this way.²⁰

NICRO identified the need to begin expanding the expertise of their Victim Support Programme to include interventions aimed at male perpetrators within the criminal justice system. Currently there are few such known programmes in South Africa. Programmes are mostly undertaken on a small scale by private practitioners and NGOs. No in-depth, documented evaluations have been published on these outcomes. It was decided to run a programme with the perpetrators of domestic violence that would be linked to the criminal justice system, as a sentencing option (NICRO International Conference Report, 2003:2).

In 1999/2000 a pilot perpetrator programme was conducted in the Eastern Cape. An initial evaluation indicated that the pilot project had met with some success. Subsequently Gauteng started their own programme in 2001, and were later followed by the Western Cape (2002) and later still by KwaZulu-Natal. In 2003 the Western Cape model was evaluated, and drawing from the information revealed in this evaluation, a full external evaluation of all NICRO perpetrator programmes nationally was conducted by Dr Svea van der Hoorn & Insideout Research in late 2003 / early 2004.

OVERALL METHODOLOGY

NICRO currently offers the largest court referral partnership programme in the country, and is one of the few SA NGOs dealing with perpetrators directly. It is currently the only NGO able to offer a national service in this field of intervention. Perpetrators choose to enter into NICRO programmes as part of their sentencing options. Currently there is a partnership with the Department of Justice where men who have been charged with domestic violence are referred to NICRO offices for the group counselling programme. The different provincial programmes utilise varying models, but a general description can be provided here of the methods used before more detail is given of the provincial models.

The referred men usually have to report to NICRO within a court appointed number of days after their court appearance, for assessment, and where possible their partners should accompany them during the assessment interview. Men who are not willing to attend the programme or refuse to accept any responsibility for the domestic violence that took place or have serious mental problems, are not accepted into the group, but are referred back to the court or sometimes diverted for other counselling with specialist organisations. Those that are accepted receive a postponed court date and then start with the group counselling. It is compulsory for group members to attend the 12-week programme.

If a group member complies with requirements – attends the sessions, participates actively in discussions, accepts accountability and responsibility for his behaviour, NICRO writes a report to the court stating that the referred man has successfully completed the programme. If he does not comply, the report to the court will recommend that the man be sentenced appropriately.

With regard to the Domestic Violence Act of 1999 and the dynamics of domestic violence, including confronting the men regarding male domination and power and control, the programme also focuses on linking the causes of domestic violence to the group's cultural and social context and the impact of socialisation by challenging the men to identify gender perceptions.

The overall framework of the programme aims to empower the abusers with information, the origin of these perceptions and stereotyped gender roles. The programme encourages accountability and responsibility for past and present abusive behaviour. The men are provided with information and practical ways of conflict resolution and how to relate to women and children in non-violent and non-controlling ways. Interestingly, most men expressed happiness at being given a space in which to talk about men's issues and identity. They pointed out that no other such space exists for them in society.

Because of NICRO's lengthy experience in dealing with perpetrators of violent crime, the organisation recognised that imprisoning perpetrators did not address violent behaviour, believing that the current state of correctional services compounds violence rather than rehabilitates individuals.

The pilot programmes have utilised three major international models:

The Duluth Model (Minnesota, USA);

The Westside Domestic Violence Project Model (Chicago, USA);

The National Campaign Against Violence Programmes for Perpetrators (Australia).

Within the programme, facilitators aim at three objectives for the groups, namely:

- To inform and educate group members on what domestic violence is; the cycle of abuse using power and control and the content of the current Domestic Violence Act;
- To challenge beliefs that the group members may have that lead to abusive behaviour. Facilitators challenge these distorted beliefs through various practical exercise and group discussions.
- To identify practical alternatives to violence and to practise assertiveness skills through role-plays and dramas.

NICRO has reviewed practice in South Africa, and spoken to key practitioners in the field. As a result their programmes mainly use group work with perpetrators. As noted in the Report, research has shown that individual and couple counselling has not been an effective method of intervention in dealing with domestic violence. Reasons and advantages for choosing group counselling as a method of intervention include:

- Active workshops on problems in the group;
- Group counselling through which the abuse is openly made the responsibility of the abuser and at which the abuser is held accountable for his actions;
- Peer challenges, since the abuser is confronted by 'his peers' in terms of his own justifications, minimisations, denial and distorted beliefs;
- Cost effectiveness of working with groups instead of individuals in terms of money and person power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluations have provided recommendations on how the programmes can be further improved.

The national evaluation considered the following:

- The perpetrator domestic violence (PDV) model in terms of the four criteria set by NICRO (namely, the establishment of a perpetrator group, a partner group, capacity building of the criminal justice system and building partnerships with other service organisations);
- The model's programme theory including the PDV team's theory of violence and the expected outcomes of the programme;
- The implementation issues faced by the various provincial PDV teams, including their relationship with criminal justice personnel and monitoring of the programme;
- The outcomes based on the views of the criminal justice personnel, perpetrators and their partners.

A comprehensive guideline document around the NICRO model for perpetrator programmes and a training package will be developed from the evaluation. Workshops will be held with relevant provinces implementing the programme, scheduled for March 2005. Plans are in place to roll out the programme to other provinces during 2004 and 2005.

PROVINCIAL PROGRAMMES

A number of provincial programmes have been implemented in the Western Cape, Kwa Zulu-Natal and Gauteng. Information summarising briefly the scope of the various provincial programmes is listed below.

EASTERN CAPE

The Eastern Cape PDV programme is a three-pronged intervention, aimed at different target groups: the perpetrators of domestic violence, their partners and the criminal justice personnel. The programme also meets the fourth criteria set by NICRO, which is to establish supporting partnerships. The Eastern Cape has implemented the PDV programme at two sites, Port Elizabeth and East London since 2001.

WESTERN CAPE

The Western Cape PDV programme only meets two of the four criteria set by NICRO, having implemented both perpetrator and partner groups. The programme has not yet trained criminal justice personnel or developed formal partnerships with other organisations.

KWAZULU-NATAL

The Durban PDV model meets only one of the four key components set by the NICRO national office. While the model includes a group-based intervention for perpetrators it does not, as of yet, include a support group for partners, capacity building for the criminal justice system, nor has it established formal partnerships with other organisations.

GAUTENG

The Gauteng PDV model meets only some of the four criteria set by the NICRO national office. The model includes an intervention for perpetrators and their partners. However, it does not yet include training for justice personnel nor has it established formal partnerships with other organisations.

The following recommendations were made in the evaluation of the NICRO provincial programmes.

DESIGN OF THE PDV PROGRAMME

INCREASED NATIONAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITY

Each province was given the responsibility for and autonomy to design the form and content of their own PDV programme. However, this led to problems, such as:

- Duplication of resources resulting from nine provincial programmes of their own;
- Some provinces have struggled to get the programme off the ground and develop programme content, due to a shortage of resources;
- Programme conceptualisation suffered in some provinces due to a lack of training skills and experience within the provinces.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The evaluation recommended a revision and updating of the rationale and intended outputs of the PDV programme. Objectives would need to be set for each of the criteria/aspects of the programme. Fulfilment of these could be seen as an indicator for measurement. These should include specific goals for change, resulting from the intervention, described in SMART language (specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable, and within time limits). Indicators to measure how effectively the group works with the perpetrators and the partners needs to be developed (Van der Hoorn *et al*, 2004:20).

CLOSER NATIONAL MANAGEMENT

MINIMUM STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The reviewers noted that the 'hands off' or decentralised approach to provincial PDV programmes needed minimum standards, especially in the light of the broad definitions contained in the Domestic Violence Act. Minimum standards could include, for example, the minimum length of the course, guidelines regarding the facilitation of the groups (gender of facilitators, co-facilitation), and guidelines for assessing perpetrators (for example, not in the presence of their partners) and that the PDV programme should only focus on issues of domestic violence and refer out other problems such as marital problems or substance abuse.

STANDARDISED PROGRAMMING

All provincial perpetrator groups should be consistent with the content of their programmes. A programme containing all of the above would need to be included in a facilitators programme manual.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR FACILITATORS

It would be useful to offer deeper support to facilitators, and create opportunities for the provincial programme implementers to share the lessons they had learnt.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FACILITATORS

PERSONAL AWARENESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF FACILITATORS

Facilitators should be given the opportunity to explore their belief systems so that they are able to act as neutral forces with the groups.

AGE AND EXPERIENCE OF FACILITATORS

Facilitating groups of perpetrators of domestic violence is highly skilled work; a young and relatively inexperienced facilitator may not have the necessary level of insight and wisdom. Age and marital status may also play a role culturally in the respect given by perpetrators to facilitators.

FACILITATION OF GROUPS

The Duluth model suggests that the groups be co-facilitated by both a male and a female facilitator. None of the NICRO provinces adhered very strongly to this suggestion. Co-facilitation is seen as particularly important considering the possible inexperience of facilitators, and that the chance to debrief and to receive support may not be very structured or consistent. However, it was found that there were mixed reports from perpetrators regarding the use of female facilitators. Perpetrators were divided in their opinion of female facilitators. A strong argument could be made for using male facilitators only.

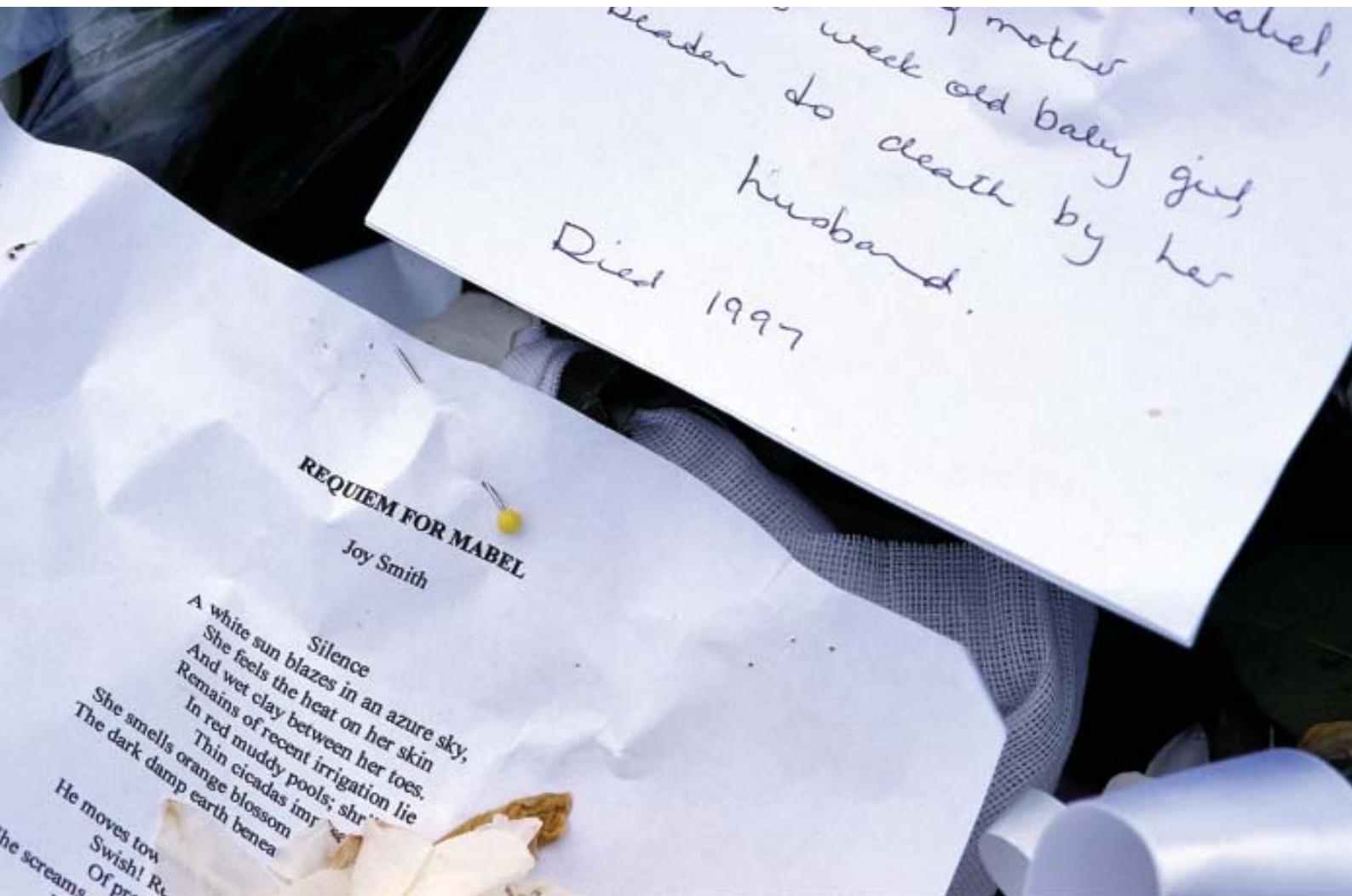
GROUP STRUCTURE

PERPETRATOR GROUP

The overall consensus across provinces was that a closed group structure encouraged regular attendance and allowed for a sense of group cohesion to develop, which was important. Those who worked with mandated perpetrators believed that working with these participants is easier in terms of control. The choice of working with mandated or voluntary participants may be dependent on the choice of setting of the PDV programme (Van der Hoorn *et al*, 2004:22).

PARTNER GROUPS

Partner groups suffer from low attendance rates. Issues may be accessibility in terms of time of the group, and transport. However, a more frequently cited reason was that partners felt that by attending the groups they would be assuming some of the responsibility for the violence that took place. This misunderstanding could be rectified when facilitators advertise the existence of the groups. It is important to keep the focus on the perpetrator.



JOINT SESSIONS

Perpetrators were generally in favour of some joint perpetrator and partner sessions. However, partners were not all of the view that joint sessions would be beneficial. There is an element of danger in this approach in that disclosure or challenge may expose the victim to further violence once the session is over. Such sessions could be placed at the end of the programme.

AFTER CARE

Follow-up programmes increase the long-term influence of the programme. The Alcoholics Anonymous model (buddy system plus drop-in meetings) provides a model. An after-care programme could be offered for 12 months after completion. The facilitator would establish the mix of after-care activities appropriate for each perpetrator and his partner as part of the closure of the initial group work.

COURT SETTING

Some PDV programmes were set within the criminal and some within the civil court context. Challenges arose for both. In the civil courts, for example, the magistrate did not have the power to mandate participation in the PDV programme in the form of a court order. In the criminal court setting, the PDV team was limited by the poor attendance of partners (and in some cases perpetrators).

ACCOUNTABILITY

The NICRO PDV programme aims to provide an effective sentencing option that holds perpetrators accountable for their abusive behaviour (Van der Hoorn *et al*, 2004:24). Several barriers exist to achieving this. These range from the focus of the programme's content and the facilitators' experience, to the limitations within the criminal justice system itself in relation to domestic violence. Attendance requirements, for example, were unclear in some provinces and the courts did not seem to take the progress of the perpetrator – or his level of attendance

in the programme – into account before sentencing. As a result the message that domestic violence has no, or only minor, consequences is unintentionally conveyed by NICRO’s PDV programme. In order for the PDV programme to achieve its goal of offering an effective alternative sentence, the programme would need to first address these challenges.

MONITORING

Provincial offices kept records of the most important aspects of the programme, but most kept records in a haphazard manner which would present a problem if the relevant staff left NICRO without a coherent monitoring system in place. This also impacts negatively on attempts to evaluate such programmes.

The evaluation suggested that it becomes routine for all facilitators to keep records of:

- Process notes on each session that could also be used for supervision;
- List of dates of sessions for each group;
- Comments and feedback from the perpetrators at the end of the programme;
- Victim sessions and opinions as they often provide the only source to cross-check perpetrator behaviour.

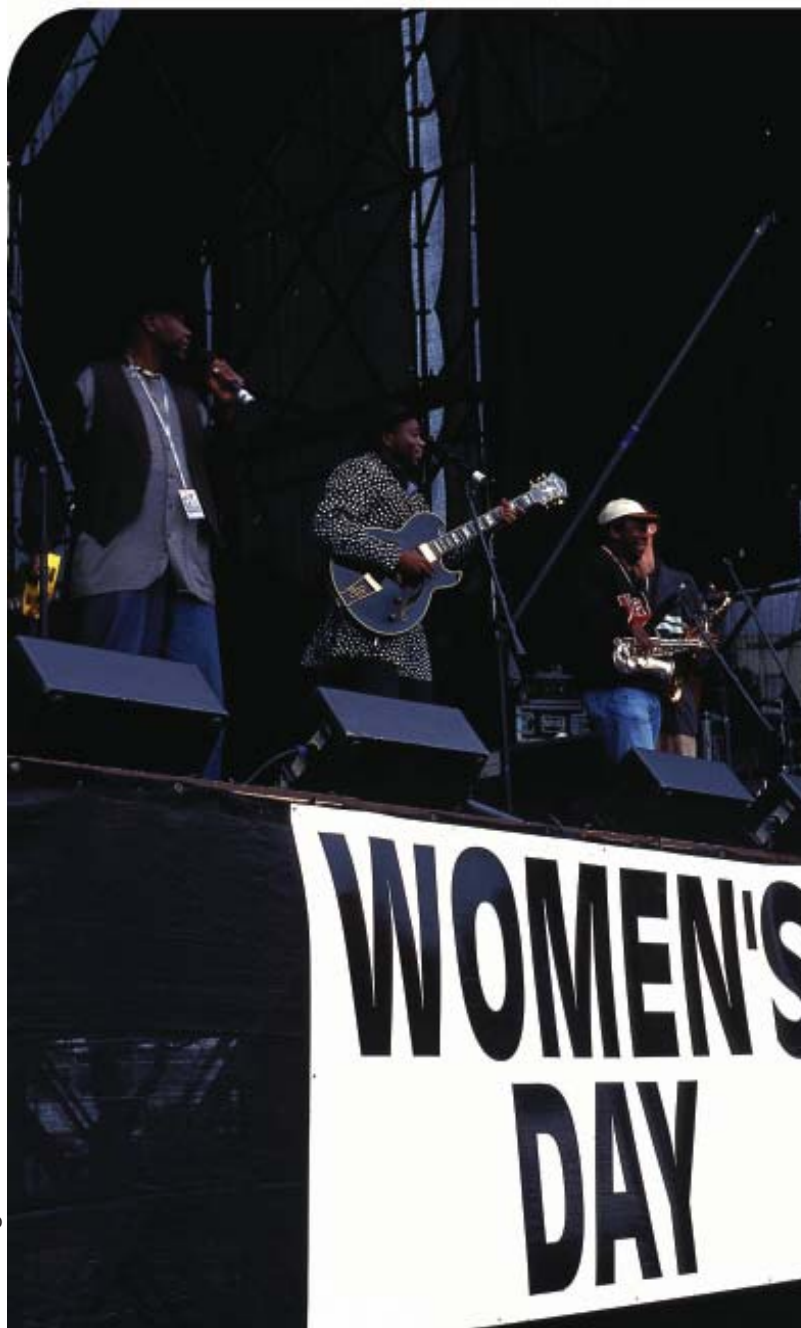
ADDITIONAL POINTS FROM NICRO WESTERN CAPE EVALUATION

Some additional useful points for such programmes may be noted from the 2003 NICRO Western Cape Programme Evaluation. They are noted here to illustrate and reinforce the recommendations from the overall national report.

- Develop a Zero Tolerance ethos towards domestic violence;
- Promote a culture of deterrence;
- Programmes must collaborate with other key role players – justice, health, correctional services, battered women’s programmes, and social institutions;
- Treatment/programme provision must include ongoing monitoring and evaluation, with co-operation by perpetrators with follow-ups

included in the requirements for completion;

- Perpetrators must consent to treatment providers having access to their victims. Victim inputs are essential for balancing perpetrator self-evaluations;
- Acknowledgement that treatment of perpetrators is merely one other option, e.g. fines may work;
- Closed groups work better than open groups;
- Although couple counselling on its own is not used, an integrated counselling model is being used – combining group with individual (and where appropriate) couple counselling. These appear to supplement each other very well;
- Staff debriefing was found to play a very important role;



- Accountability to the courts for finishing the group programme is necessary;
- Communication with the courts after the group is completed is necessary as well;
- Perpetrators should pay a fee for services, with alternatives for indigent persons;
- Victims did not feel that NICRO was neglecting them by running such programmes;
- Longer period interventions, e.g. group and individual intervention stretching over 11 months, would provide greater depth and sustainability to the intervention.

The first phase of the process consists of high impact intervention with group sessions taking place twice a week for two weeks. The high impact work at the beginning of the process is done largely to establish a good and trusting working relationship as quickly as possible with the members, as well as to deal with possible intense and/or adverse emotions as a result of him being arrested and 'sentenced' to the group. Using the psychodynamic approach during this phase, perpetrators are made aware of how their witnessing of violence and/or dysfunctional relationships with a parent(s) is influencing their present attitudes and/or behaviour about using violence in their present relationships.

The second part of the group process consists of medium impact intervention, where group interaction takes place once a week for eight weeks. During this phase group members are confronted with the reason(s) for why they were referred to this group by the court, in order for them to accept accountability for their actions. Within this phase the focus repeatedly is on helping the group member to accept responsibility for his violent behaviour, for him to stop minimising the event(s) that took place between him and his partner/wife, as well as to facilitate the development of victim empathy.²¹

The third phase consists of low impact group interaction, with group sessions taking place fortnightly. This is coupled with individual sessions that take place in the weeks that the groups are not running. During this phase's group sessions, members are educated in terms of issues concerning domestic violence, such as myths, the cycle of violence, as well as the impact

of violence on their children. During the individual sessions, time is spent on members' personal relationships (at home/work), which would help to facilitate the member's change. The types of intervention that will usually take place during this phase are family and/or relationship counselling.

The fourth and final phase is known as the After-care phase, consisting of three bi-monthly individual follow-up sessions, after which an 'open-door' policy is activated. During this time, the perpetrator is hopefully equipped enough to manage frustrating events/situations in his daily functioning with greater ease, which would previously have caused him to lash out in an inappropriate and/or aggressive way. Because an 'open-door' policy is in place, the members would be able to call on the facilitators, in order to get help with problems.

The following challenges were identified from the Western Cape programme report:

- Courts were not holding perpetrators accountable, referrals were also coming slowly;
- Networking is necessary;
- Getting partners to attend support groups is very difficult;
- Absenteeism and alcohol abuse by group members undermines their participation and even leads to relapses, their suspension from the group and their referral back to the courts.

An interesting development is that if perpetrators fail the assessment, then NICRO tries not to refer perpetrators back to court if not accepted to the group, and if the person is not suited for the group, an alternative intervention is planned for him, which can include individual and family counselling, or referral to another agency for excessive aggression or drug or alcohol or family counselling.

FUNDING

Funders have not been requesting men's programmes. NICRO has had to convince funders of the importance of such initiatives. Funders are now starting to see such work as necessary.²²

SOME OF THE DISADVANTAGES OF IMPLEMENTING A PERPETRATOR PROGRAMME FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ABUSERS, WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTED BY NICRO FACILITATORS, ARE:

Suitability of all abusers: Not all people participate spontaneously in a group setting. In fact some people cannot function in a group at all. When these people are placed in a group counselling programme, it could hinder their development.

Therapeutic settings use community sanction: An integrated approach is necessary whereby the whole community condemns violence and challenges the behaviour of the abuser.

Overloaded courts and police: The criminal justice system is often too overburdened to take on board the tool of PDV programmes and interact with it effectively;

Gives victim hope: Most victims hope that their partners will change when they are attending counselling. They may therefore prolong the time they stay in

the abusive relationship and increase their vulnerability.

'The soft option': Counselling is not offered to all offenders of crime. In this case (GBV) it may encourage denial that domestic violence is a crime, where the programme is used as a substitute for criminal prosecution and sentencing, it may also be viewed as the 'soft' option.

Inconclusive research: As noted in the Report, conclusive evidence is still lacking to prove the effectiveness of perpetrators programmes. Recidivism in the long term has not often been measured, and where it has, the success rates drop below 50%. As a result NICRO is busy developing its own long-term evaluation tools and criteria, including the tracking of re-offenders, and 'indicators of recovery' for victims.

SUMMARY

NICRO's interventions with men are based on a long-standing history of working with perpetrators of violent crime. Their philosophy is based on the power of rehabilitation, and on the experience of working with female survivors of VAW. This intimate knowledge of both sides of the violence paradigm has enabled NICRO to craft a response that is targeted and measurable. NICRO fully supports the principles of restorative justice whereby perpetrators should take actions to correct the wrong they have done.

NICRO's Men's Programme work is specifically with perpetrators of domestic violence, and they offer this specific service through courts and voluntary referrals. This enables them to identify and work with perpetrators of violence at a key intervention point.

As a national organisation, NICRO is not based in any specific community, but the nature of their intervention means that they are informed by their previous work. NICRO's staff is located in all provinces in South Africa, and their local presence and experience inform the national programmes. This enables the organisation to have national impact with local influence.

The research and evaluation processes that NICRO has instituted ensures that the Programme will be specifically South African, although influenced by the lessons learned from other organisations internationally.

