Building youth resilience to crime and violence: a case study from the southern Cape

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The importance of school

Children who perform poorly at school, who drop out and who do not feel committed to school, who have low educational aspirations and who change school often are more likely to engage in violent behavior.

But, attachment to school protects against violence

(source: van der Merwe, Dawes and Ward in Youth Violence, 2012)
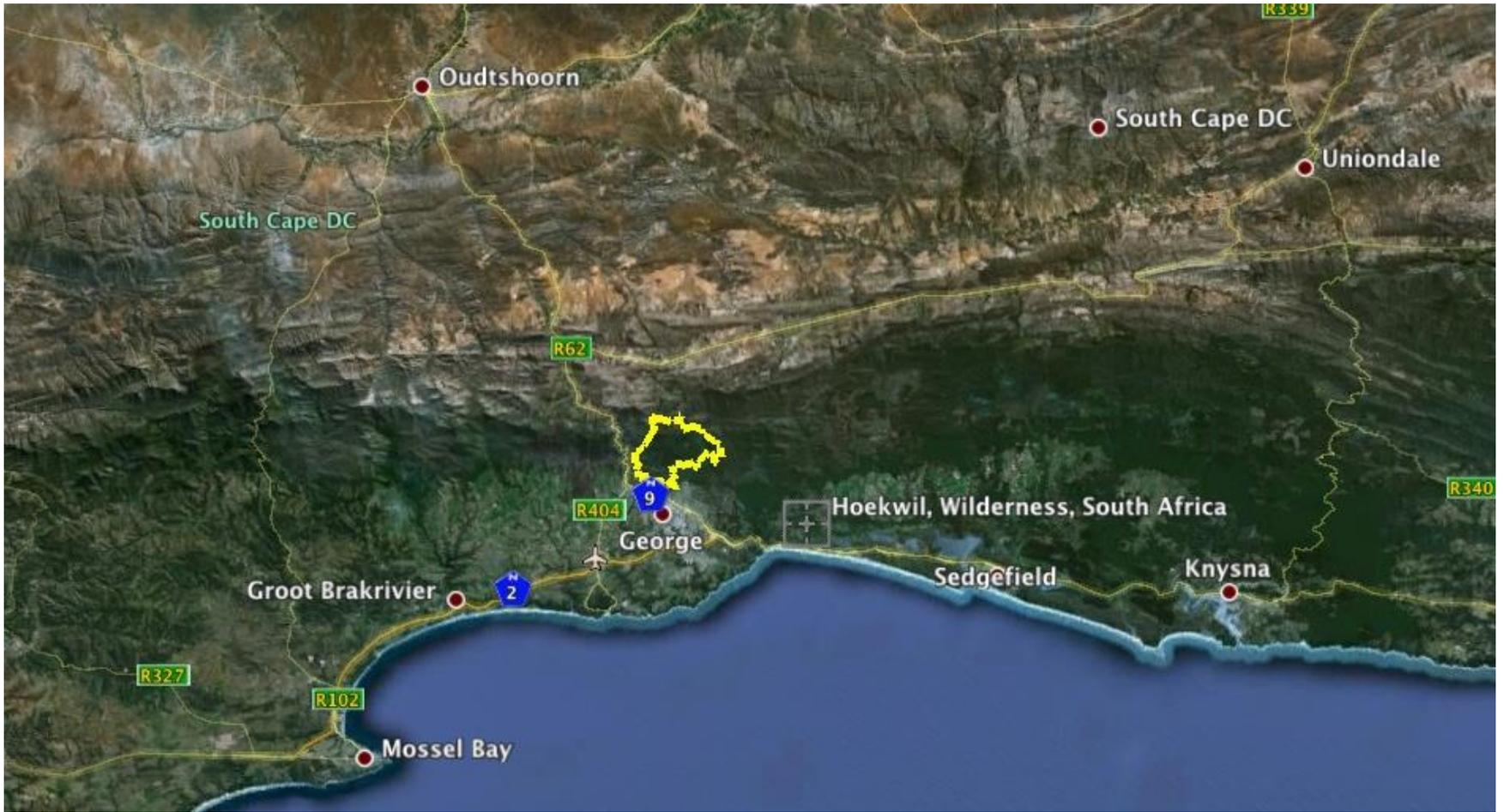
Some demographics

- 303 families with 570 children (<18)
- Home language: 94% Afrikaans, Xhosa 6%
- Only half of all families in Touwsranten have an income from work
- 56,8% of families receive a child support grant
- 5 families have no income at all
- 3/4 of families have run out of money for food at some stage
- 60,7% have run out of money for food in the last 30 days (prior to the study)
- 68,2% of children in Touwranten get food from the school

Background to the Seven Passes Initiative

- 2007 gang violence on commercial farms

- Concern about high school drop out and low attendance levels

- Concern about young people being involved in crime and violence (both as victims and perpetrators)

- Boredom, lack of supervision, lack of support, lack of positive role models – many opportunities and motivations for not attending school

Crime prevention through educational support: The Seven Passes Initiative

What Seven Passes does

- Support schooling and school connectedness: homework classes, NMMU classes, York High, facilitators in classrooms: 10 homework class facilitators, post-matrics from Touwsranten have been recruited and are supported to facilitate the homework classes at the school. Three of these facilitators in the classrooms as teacher assistants during the day. After school they facilitate homework classes, thereby building strong relationships with the children and teachers.

- Provision of pro-social activities

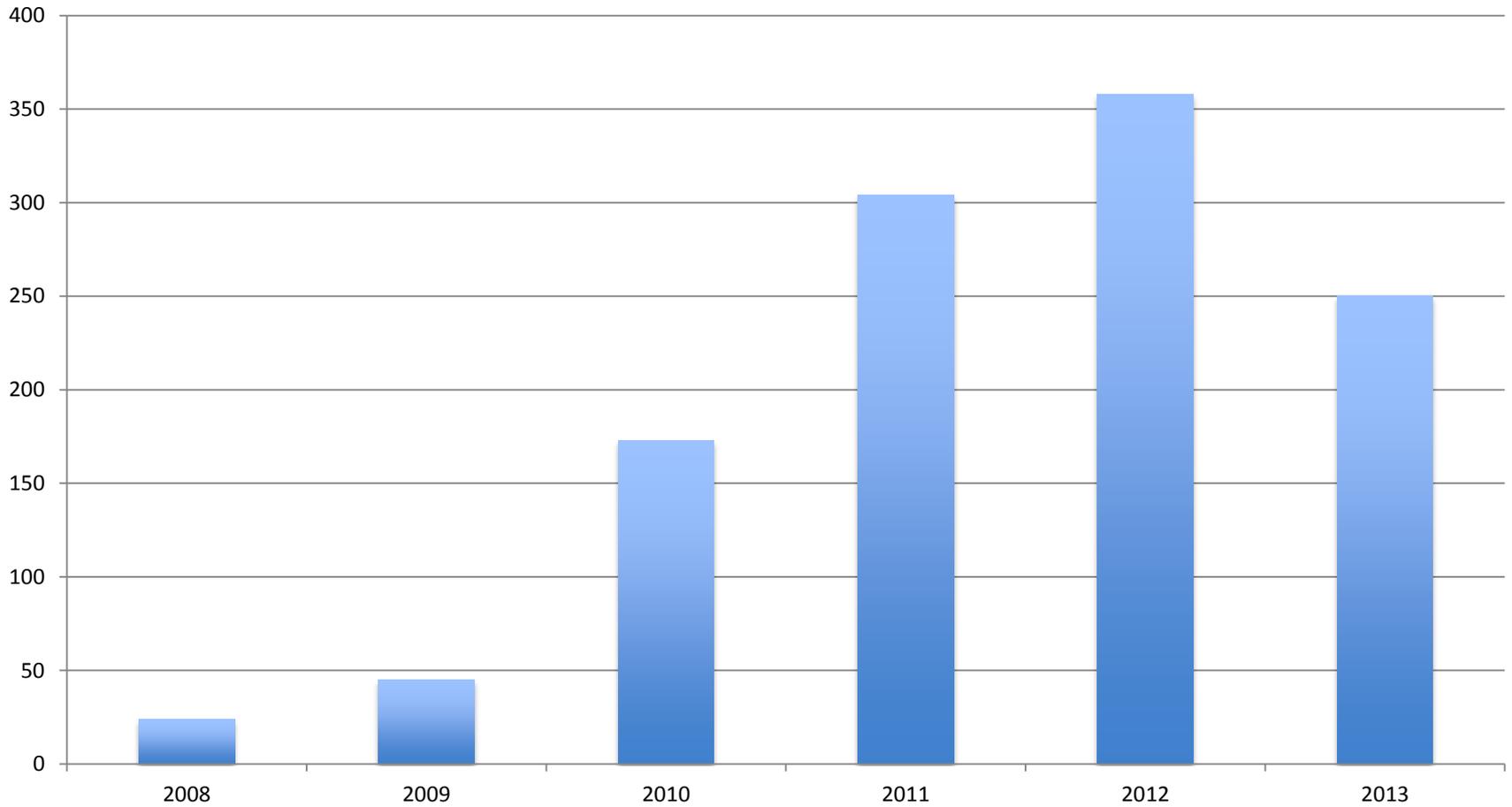- Life skills support and development

- Meals

Homework support

- Building social capital while providing subject specific support

- Building bridges between parents, children and teachers

Homework class attendance

Parenting support

Project by Prof Cathy Ward (UCT), ISS and the Seven Passes Initiative:

- Objectives:
  - Establish a baseline against which change in parenting can be assessed.
  - Identify key problems as well as things parents in Touwsranten are doing well, so as to develop a basis for later messaging.
  - Demonstrate that without the intervention, parenting remains unchanged.

Why focus on parenting?

Parenting is key to children's cognitive, health and social development, and has long-term implications for their abilities to succeed at school, maintain healthy relationships, and their abilities to be resilient to drugs, delinquency and violence.

- References:
  Richter, L. (2004). *The importance of caregiver-child interactions for the survival and healthy development of young children*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organisation.

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Baseline surveys

- Community Audit
- Survey of all households in which there are children
- Two waves: August 2012 and May 2013

Methodology

- Parenting
  - Alabama Parenting Questionnaire, which assesses areas of parenting associated with child conduct disorders (positive parenting, parental involvement with children, poor monitoring and supervision of children, corporal punishment, and inconsistent discipline);
- Child behaviour
  - Child Behavior Checklist, which allows assessment of internalizing disorders (anxiety and depression) and externalizing disorders (aggression and conduct problems);
- The Parenting Stress Index
  - an indicator of how stressful parents find the work of parenting
- Intimate partner violence in the home
  - a stressor which can affect both parenting and child behaviour, using items from the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale
- Parents' mental health
  - using the General Health Questionnaire, a screening tool for anxiety and depression;
- Parents' substance misuse
  - using the Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Test (ASSIST)
- Parents' preferences in terms of delivery methods for a programme
- Socio economic indicators

What we found

- Inconsistent parenting
  - Parents are reporting quite high levels of positive parenting and involvement, but also relatively high levels of problematic parenting – poor monitoring of their children, inconsistent discipline, and corporal punishment. This is likely to mean that, although they mean well, they use a variety of parenting strategies very inconsistently.

Children's problems

Scale	Wave 1	Wave 2
Internalising problems	3.54	5.23
Externalising problems	3.62	7.31

Parents reported more significantly more problems in wave 2 than in wave 1.

Wave 1:
Internalising disorders: 29 children (12.8%) are in the clinical range.
Externalising disorders: 18 children (4.8%).

But, children can be very unhappy and/or behave in ways that are difficult to manage without achieving the clinical cut-off; for this reason, we used the total symptom score in all analyses, rather than the scores indicating whether or not children had reached the clinical cut-off.

Parenting and child behaviour

- Harsh and Inconsistent Discipline, and Positive Parenting, were significantly associated with externalising symptoms.

- Positive Parenting, Poor Monitoring/Supervision, and Harsh and Inconsistent Discipline are significantly associated with children's internalising symptoms

Parental stress

Measurement	Wave 1	Wave 2
Clinical range for total stress	288 (95.4%)	287 (98.6%)
At risk for child abuse	291 (96.4%)	288 (99.0%)

Parenting stress significantly associated with children's symptoms

Next steps

- A three year project is to determine whether a focused, multi-faceted intervention will positively change parenting practices in an entire population. Through:
  - Developing and delivering an evidence-based mass media campaign to reinforce positive parenting messages
  - Delivering evidence-based positive parenting workshops and programmes
  - Assessing the impact of each of the elements of the intervention both individually, and holistically over time
  - Developing a model for taking this project to scale, that is, rolling it out more widely in other communities in South Africa.
  - The overall intention is to inform policy making about the prevention of violence and aggression, and the promotion of positive child outcomes, through a wide-reach, relatively low cost positive parenting intervention package

References for parenting survey

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Thank you

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