

Elsies River Multi Stakeholder Forum



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DEPARTMENT of
COMMUNITY SAFETY
Provincial Government of the Western Cape

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Elsies River

Elsies River is a vibrant community of about 100 000 people located approximately 12 kilometres from the Cape Town city centre.

Like much of the city, Elsie's River is grappling with the legacy of apartheid and the ongoing socio-economic changes that have swept the city over the past decades; most notable being the shrinkage of the clothing and textile industries which traditionally employed large numbers of workers. It is estimated that 34 per cent of the population is unemployed.

A large proportion of the area consists of low-income housing such as council flats and semi-detached homes.

Building a safe Elsie's River

In 2008, the Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA) through its Criminal Justice Initiative and in partnership with the Western Cape Department of Community Safety, embarked on a new strategy to support efforts to promote community safety that are cognisant of both the need for immediate law enforcement and for long-term crime prevention.

The partners believe a balanced approach, which also recognises and seeks to address the social, economic and environmental drivers of crime, provides better prospects for long-term safety. The objectives of the project are to:

- test these assumptions
- add to the the general development of knowledge in the sector
- make a real impact on community safety

These objectives will be achieved by facilitating the implementation of provincial priorities and safety strategies through locally focussed safety plans. Elsie's River was identified as a pilot site for the project.

How do we do it?

The methodology is based on best practice and includes:

- conducting a safety audit to gain a thorough understanding of challenges faced by the Elsie's River community
- developing safety plans to address the challenges identified in the safety audit
- supporting the Elsie's River Multi Stakeholder Forum (ERMSF) as a partnership between community and government on the one hand, and private and public sector stakeholders on the other, to manage, monitor and facilitate the implementation of the safety plan
- encouraging a monitoring and evaluation to feed lessons on what works back into the project, and to make these available nationally and internationally.

What are our concerns?

The 2010 Department of Community Safety Barometer study for Elsie's River showed that fear of crime was common in Elsie's River with one in every two residents having feared crime in their community.

Residents were most concerned about their children's safety – with one in every five residents indicating that they had feared for their children's safety all the time in the year prior to the study.

Who is the Elsie's River Multi Stakeholder Forum?

The Elsie's River Multi Stakeholder Forum (ERMSF) is a dedicated group of individuals from across the political spectrum, and representing governments departments and community organisations. According to its constitution the ERMSF works to:

- review safety in Elsie's River and develop appropriate safety plans
- receive and consider regular reports on the safety plan
- monitor and evaluate the progress of the implementation of safety plans and the effect on actual levels of safety and perceptions of safety
- communicate outcomes to various stakeholders and relevant parties
- establish and maintain a database of stakeholders
- resolve conflict and build consensus among role-players
- build capacity of the key resources in Elsie's River to promote safety
- facilitate team-building within the forum
- mobilise resources and provide support for effective implementation of safety programmes
- give input, guidance and direction on appropriate strategic interventions to address safety in Elsie's River.

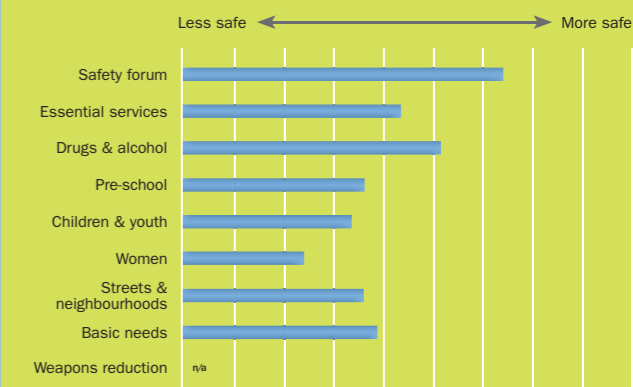
Our safety plan

The Elsie's River Safety plan works to achieve a community where:

- families and young people are supported
- programmes and services are available
- the youth have sufficient opportunities for recreation and skills development
- alcohol and substance abuse is addressed through positive awareness programmes and access to treatment and support
- safe schools are integrated into and supported by the community
- an effective and trusted criminal justice system is in place
- there is an improvement in the quality of services and infrastructure
- employment is increased
- all feel safe and there is prosperity for all.

How are we doing?

Elsie's River has been evaluated against nine themes which together provide a picture of the safety health of the community. The overall rating in each theme is presented in the graph below.



Evaluators found that although there are basic structures in place and there are a number of stakeholders implementing programmes, there continues to be poor communication between the various stakeholders which limits opportunities to interact, support, participate and, ultimately, build Elsie's River as a community of opportunity. The growth and development of the Elsie's River Multi Stakeholder Forum (ERMF) into a more inclusive body with strong systems scored highest in the evaluation. The forum is still in its infancy and does not have an extensive track record of implementing projects. However, it has laid the groundwork for a coordinated approach to safety in Elsie's River. As the ERMF becomes more established, it will become more effective in building collaboration.

The 'A community free of drug and alcohol abuse' safety theme also ranked highly in our evaluation. Elsie's River suffers the impact of drug and alcohol abuse common to most of its neighbouring communities, so it is encouraging to note that there are some systems in place to address this problem. There is, however, still plenty of room for improvement, particularly with regards to making treatment more accessible and providing a wider variety of recreational options. The safety themes 'A safe and supportive environment for children' and 'youth' and 'A safe and supportive environment for women' received the lowest ratings. Limited economic opportunities was the main reason for the low score in both cases. While this is a challenge for everyone living in Elsie's River, it is something that is felt particularly acutely by these groups. This will continue to be a key focus of the ERMSF in the years to come.

What are our future plans?

- To continue updating the Safety Plan by keeping track of the safety needs of the community.
- To continue monitoring how safe Elsie's River is with reference to the safety themes identified.
- To continue working with all stakeholders for a safer Elsie's River.