# iSafety Ngoku:
# Seeking Sanctuary in Western Cape Schools
## Presentation to the Standing Committee on Education

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# Presentation Outline

➜ EE's Theory of Change

➜ School visits: Objectives and Methodology

➜ Findings

- ◆ Types of reported school violence

- ◆ Unpacking the **four pillars of school safety**

  - Pillar 1: Security measures in line with the school infrastructure law
  - Pillar 2: Functional school-based safety structures
  - Pillar 3: Adequate provision of psychosocial support
  - Pillar 4: Knowledge of and use of existing policies

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# EE's Theory of Change

EE works to develop **conscientised, organised youth** as enablers of **equal, just, and quality education.** To do so, EE works for **progressive reforms** in policy and practice, **material change** at individual schools, and **politicised, informed, motivated, activists** in school communities across South Africa.



EE Theory of Change
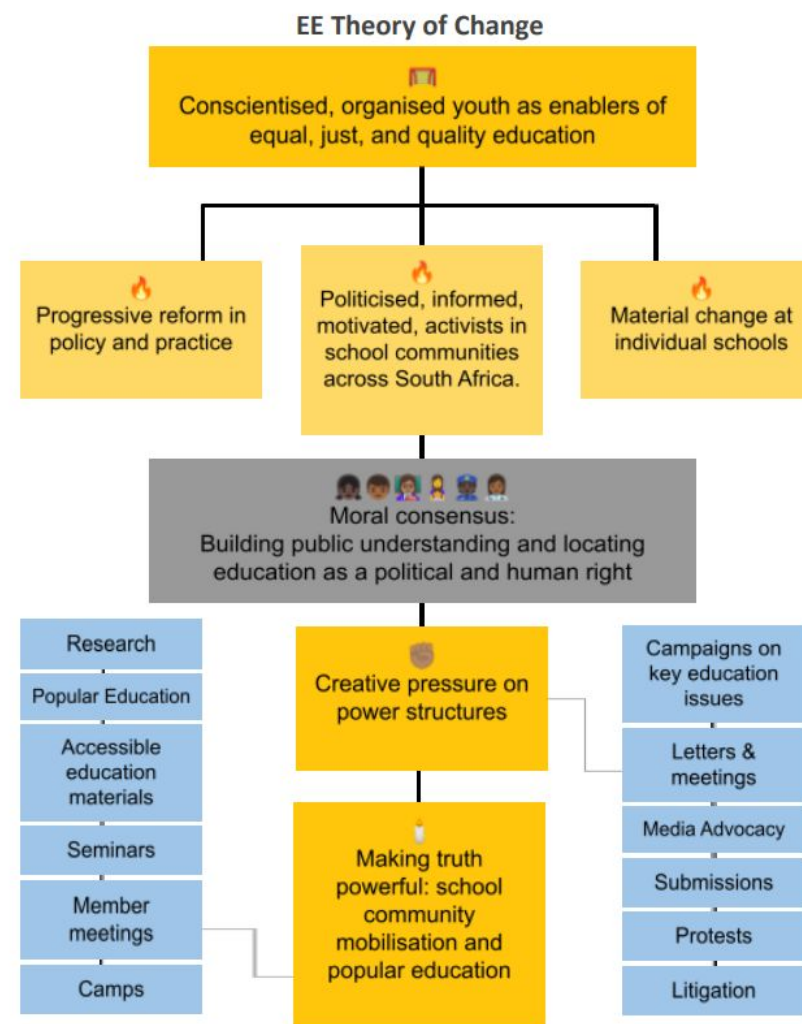
# Objectives of the school visits

Between August and September 2019, EE visited **40 public schools** located across various areas of the Cape Town Metro.

We had three objectives:

1. Determine and identify the **types of violence perpetrated** at these schools;
2. Identify and investigate **contributing factors to the recurrence of violence** at schools; and
3. Understand whether these schools are **adequately supported by national and provincial governments** to create safe and resilient environments for learners, as well as assess if interventions implemented at national and provincial levels translate to **positive shifts in experiences** of school safety in the Western Cape.

# Methodology

## Phase 1

- **Structured interviews with school officials:**
  - members of school management teams;
  - teachers; and/or
  - safety officers

- **Physical observation tool:**

## Phase 2

- **Follow-up interviews with:**
  - members of school safety committees; and
  - members of school-based support teams

This was done to deepen our understanding of their **roles and responsibilities**, the **functionality** of the structures, and whether they **require support** from government officials.

# Findings:
## Types of reported school violence

Violent incidents disclosed to the school administration in the year prior to the school visit

**Schools reported receiving significant reports of:**

- physical assault resulting in serious injury to a learner (20%)
- stabbings (38%)
- sexual harassment (23%)
- physical assault against a teacher by a learner (18%); and
- physical assault resulting in significant injury to a teacher (8%)

# Major threats to learners' safety in schools



DRUG USE
85%

ALCOHOL USE
53%

BURGLARY
53%

50%

63%
THEFT OF PERSONAL PROPERTY

53%
GANG VIOLENCE

SIGNIFICANT VANDALISM

# Findings
## Pillar 1:  Security measures in line with the school infrastructure law

Regulation 9 of the Norms and Standards for school infrastructure require schools to have **perimeter fencing** and at least one other form of safety and security, **be it a security guard/patrol or an alarm system.**

The findings of the security infrastructure assessment from the school visits revealed that **schools in the Western Cape are at various stages of compliance with the school infrastructure law.**

# Findings
## Pillar 1:  Security measures in line with the school infrastructure law

All the 40 schools surveyed had some form of fencing. However, further observations revealed that some schools had fences that did not meet specific requirements set out in the school infrastructure law.

- A little more than a quarter (11) of the schools visited had fences that did not meet the 1.8 meters height standard; and
- Five schools had fences that did not cover the entire boundary of the school as required by law.

Condition of fences: quality and maintenance

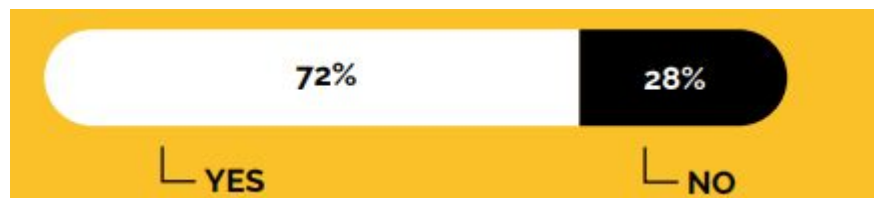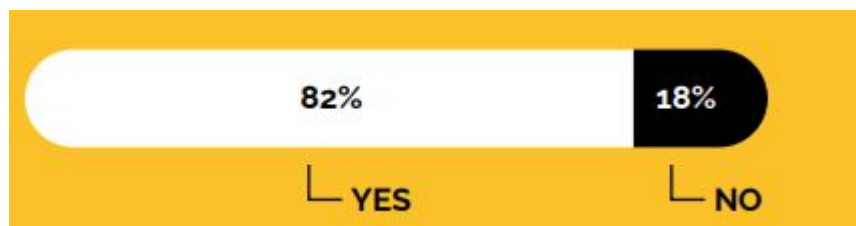# Pillar 1: Security measures in line with the school infrastructure law

| 72% | 28% |
| --- | --- |
| YES | NO |

Fig. 1: Security guard at the school

| 82% | 18% |
| --- | --- |
| YES | NO |

Fig. 2: Security guard present for the entire school day

| 56% | 44% |
| --- | --- |
| YES | NO |

Fig. 3: Security guard present at night

# Pillar 1: Security measures in line with the school infrastructure law



Fig. 4: Schools with alarm systems



Fig. 5: Schools with functional alarm systems

# Pillar 2: Functional school-based safety structures

The school safety committee is made up of different members of the school community, including: parents,learners, teachers, principals, members of the School Governing Body and School Management Team, etc. A safety officer must also be formally appointed by the principal.

This committee is responsible for designing and implementing a school safety plan and monitor it to check how well it works.
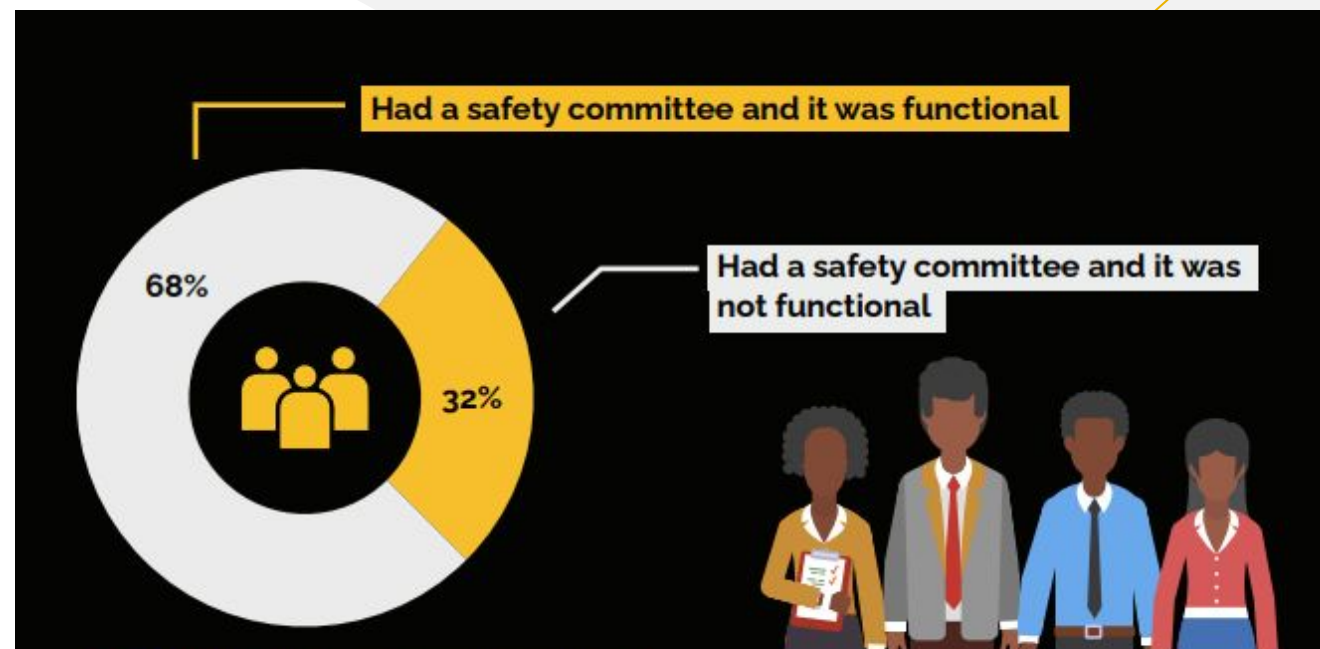
# Pillar 2: Functional school-based safety structures

The safety plan **outlines both proactive and reactive measures** to respond to safety threats and **communication protocols** to follow after a violent incident occurs.

The safety plan is a comprehensive document that helps schools adequately prepare for different safety challenges in their respective contexts.



Had a safety plan and uses it

Had a safety plan but does not use it

60%

40%
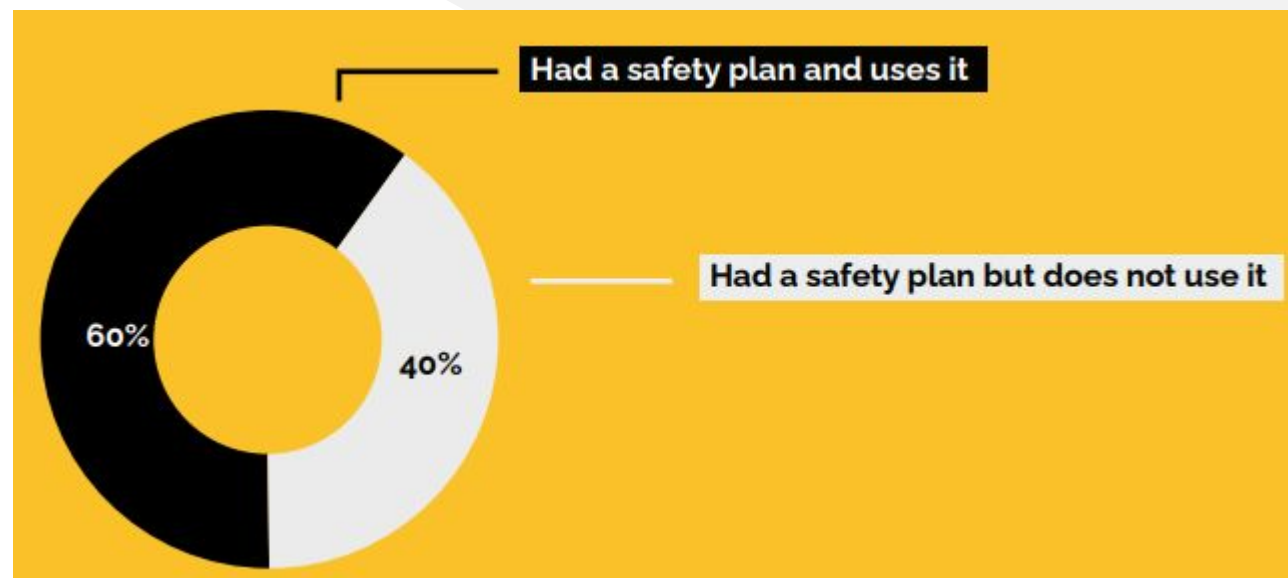
# Pillar 3: Adequate provision of psychosocial support

In addition to physical safety, learners also **need to feel emotionally and mentally healthy.** Psychosocial services are both about supporting learners and proactively addressing the **psychosocial issues that contribute to in-school violence.**

To ensure learners' mental health and wellbeing, it is necessary to have **experts who comprehend the social issues, stressors, and systems that cause learners to struggle and know how to assist them in overcoming those issues.** The provision of psychosocial support services to learners not only benefits their personal growth but also increases their involvement and inclusion in the classroom.
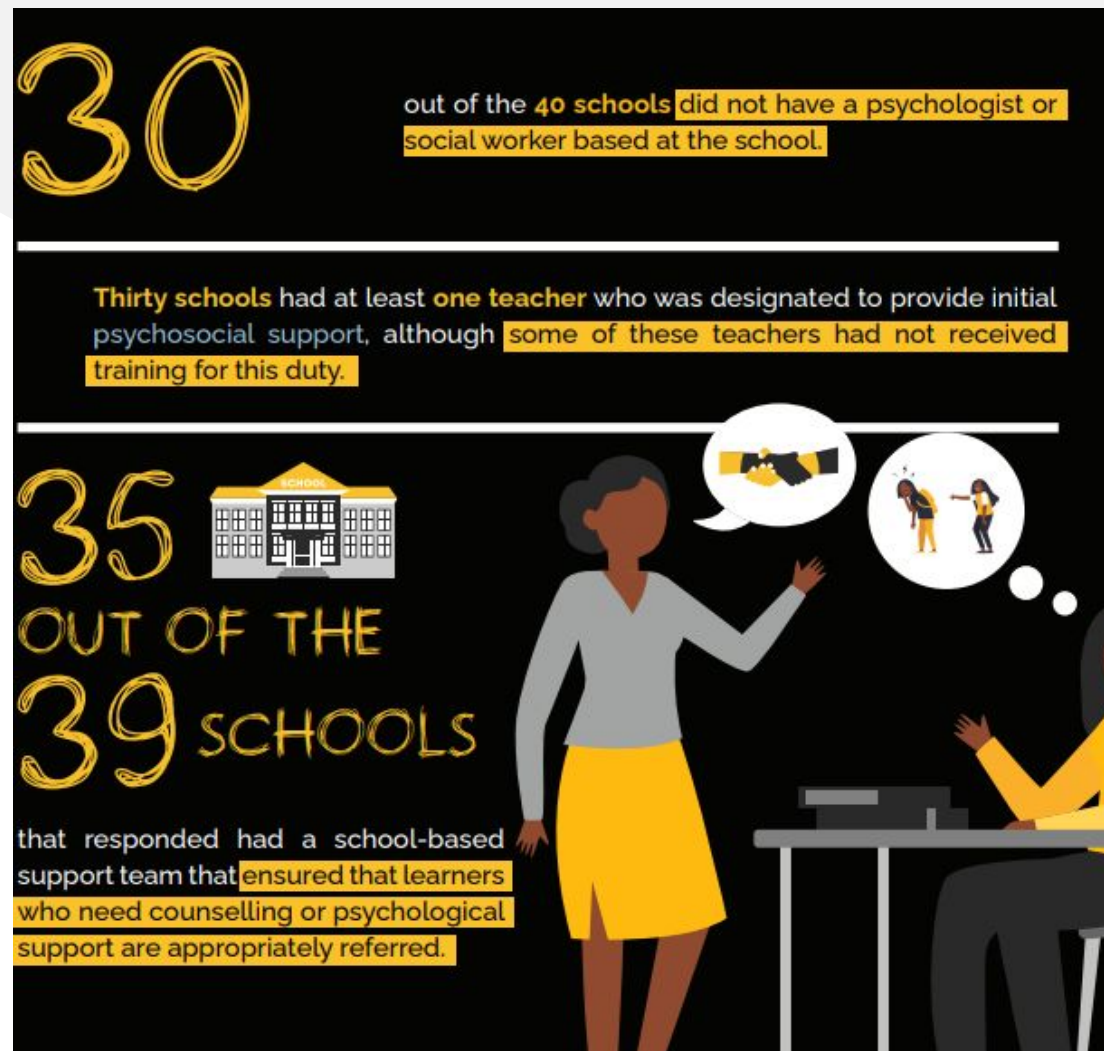
# Pillar 4: Knowledge and use of existing policies

Accessing and fully enjoying any right **begins with knowledge**. The Department of Basic Education and provincial education departments have an obligation to **create a safe, threat-free, supportive learning environment** for learners and the broader school communities.

An **awareness of the government's responsibilities to schools is the first step in accessing and enforcing delivery**. As such, we wanted to know whether schools had any knowledge of the existence of policies that regulate safety and security at schools. Representatives from each school were questioned about their awareness of or familiarity with the **National School Safety Framework (NSSF) and the Safe Schools Programme, two important policies that aim to address school safety.**

# Pillar 4: Knowledge and use of existing policies

**National School Safety Framework**
- There is a **significant gap in knowledge and awareness** of the National School Safety Framework (NSSF), which the Department of Basic Education identifies as its primary strategic school safety intervention.
- Many schools do not have the **necessary support, safety structures, and procedures** in place to implement it.

**Safe Schools Call Centre**
- Data obtained from the WCED showed that **almost no learners used the line to report issues**. Learners made up just **0.1% of the over 5 000 calls** made to the call center between 2019 and 2020.
- Some schools that did not find the call centre helpful in addressing issues blamed it on the high call volume, which made it so that they **had to wait a long time to receive assistance and, in some cases, did not get any feedback on the problems they had reported.**

# Pillar 4: Knowledge and use of existing policies



## OUR FINDINGS INDICATED THAT:

**18 OUT OF 38** schools did not know of the NSSF, much less implementing the framework.

**21 OF THE 40 SCHOOLS** had the toll-free call centre number visibly displayed on their premises for ease of access to learners.

**28 SCHOOLS** reported that they made use of the Safe Schools Call Centre, a crucial offering of the Safe Schools Programme, to report any safety concerns or violent incidents so that authorities can provide the necessary support or referrals.

# Recommendations

1. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) should commission a fully-funded revised round of the **National School Violence Study (NSVS survey)**
2. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) should coordinate with the DBE to ensure **urgent and full compliance with the security requirements in the school infrastructure law** by ensuring adequate access control measures are in place to safeguard school premises and school community
3. The WCED should support schools in **establishing functional safety committees** in schools
4. The WCED should assist schools to **bolster the provision of and access to psychosocial support services**
5. The WCED should **improve the knowledge and internal capacity of schools on national and provincial school safety interventions** such as the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) and the Safe Schools Programme

# Thank you