

SAFER PLACES: RESILIENT INSTITUTIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

El Kero, Johannesburg



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THE SPRINT PROJECT

The Safer Places: Resilient Institutions and Neighbourhoods Together (SPRINT) Project is a joint initiative between GIZ's Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention Programme (GIZ VCP), Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU NPC) and Isandla Institute. The Steering Committee includes the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), National Treasury, the Department of Human Settlements (DHS) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). It was conceptualised in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to assist selected communities across the country with building resilience.

The COVID 19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on many communities in South Africa. Social cohesion is even more at risk which might amplify risk factors for increased violence and crime. There is a need for the upscaling of targeted, area-based interventions that promote violence and crime prevention and the use of ABVPI tools.

This initiative will contribute to strengthening and empowering a learning network amongst already well-established civil society organisations, working closely with municipalities and other partners, to

apply approaches and tools for violence prevention through urban upgrading, in line with the objectives of the Integrated Urban Development Framework and other relevant policy frameworks, particularly in the human settlement and safer communities sector.

It will enhance their capacity through training, structured exchanges and knowledge dissemination and support municipalities with the implementation of area-based interventions that promote the building of safer communities. This will ease risk factors for, and build protective factors against violence and crime through co-creation and improved ownership in selected areas. Such interventions entail a package of social, economic and infrastructural interventions, including the promotion of opportunities especially for young people.

The Laboratory Pathway of the SPRINT Project involves capacity-building processes with participating municipalities and CSOs; an in-depth situational analysis; and hands-on mentoring support with two specific sites with the implementation of a Community Development Fund. It focuses on co-designing and implementing practical, area-based solutions to violence-related challenges. This document is a situational analysis of a site within the Laboratory.

EL KERO PARK IN HILLBROW

Hillbrow is situated in the inner-city of Johannesburg; in 2011 it had an approximate population of 74 000 people and 25 000 households (Frith, 2011). The neighbourhood is mostly characterised by high density residential apartments, mixed-use ground floor units and limited industrial activity. Pre-1980s, Hillbrow was all-white but became one of the first mixed-race areas under Apartheid. Today, many residents are migrant workers who come from across the country, and Africa at-large.

Unfortunately, the area is now characterised by organised crime syndicates. While, since 2011, the murder rate in the City of Joburg has steadily increased to 32 murders per 100 000 people between 2019 and 2020, rates in Hillbrow Precinct are significantly higher: over 5% of murders in Joburg in 2013/2014 took place in the precinct. The precinct also had the second highest number of violent crime incidents between 2012 and 2014, at a rate of 2 786 violent crimes per 100 000 people. Other social issues in Hillbrow include hijacked buildings (linked to gang activity and landlord exploitation) or otherwise unsafe buildings, xenophobia, overpopulation, unsafe sex work conditions, drugs and unemployment.

Johannesburg's inner-city has been undergoing a rejuvenation process from the

public and private sector for over a decade. City Improvement Districts across the space have a core focus on 'safe and clean' public urban management. The eKhaya Neighbourhood Improvement District also focuses on creating a strong residential community in a poverty-stricken area. Since 2005, the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), on behalf of CoJ, has undertaken revitalising actions in Hillbrow, aimed at creating liveable and people-friendly public spaces for human interaction.

Today, JDA is working with eKhaya Neighbourhood in Hillbrow to develop a new park. The El Kero Park site is a previously neglected road reserve on the corner of Pietersen and Claim Streets. Criminals have been known to take advantage of the space, so people avoid it. Construction has not yet begun, but park management structures are in place for when development happens. The site is surrounded by two social housing developments: El Kero House, run by Madulammoho Development Agency, and Sylvadale Mansions, run by the Johannesburg Housing Company. The Hillbrow Boxing Gym – a landmark in the community – forms part of the southern boundary of the site. Across Quartz Street, to the west of the future park, is an extremely dangerous hijacked building, called Vanin Court, and two schools. To the east, across Claim Street, the fenced-in and well-guarded eKhaya Park offers space for mostly boys' and men's sports. Many formal and informal businesses also surround the El Kero site.



AREA COORDINATION READINESS

Three entities make up the City of Joburg's (CoJ) core team in the SPRINT Lab: the Joburg City Safety Programme (JCSP), City Transformation and Spatial Planning (CTSP), and the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA). They have already established a strong partnership with eKhaya Neighbourhood Improvement District (referred to hereafter as "eKhaya").

Joburg's most area coordination-enabling policy is the *Joburg City Safety Strategy (JCSS)*, which mandates joint community-and-CoJ ward-based safety planning (CoJ, 2015:58). Although safety planning has not yet been rolled out, it is aimed towards both evidence-based and 'geographically-tailored' solutions and the Inner City is meant to be its pilot site. The JCSS also jumpstarts the Joburg 10+ programme, providing more Johannesburg Metro Police at ward-level. Lastly, the strategy encourages meaningful, long-term partnerships and digital tech (CoJ, 2015:14, 58). A second enabling policy is the *Inner-City Safer Community Parks Strategy*. In addition to these policies, municipal-community partnership will make area coordination work at El Kero. The JDA has been a long-term partner to eKhaya and other Hillbrow organisations since 2008. The area is characterised by great civil society capacity and a true spirit of local partnership. Additionally, CoJ leadership from CTSP, JDA and JCSP have written to endorse collaboration through the SPRINT Lab.

The skilled municipal champions on the core team have embraced transversal integration for the Lab. The JDA team includes individuals with extensive inner-city knowledge and familiarity with El Kero; CTSP can support with design, precinct management plan development and the

upcoming inner city interactive model; and Joburg City Safety has access to key safety stakeholders. However, the core team is less involved on the ground; in part, this is because JDA is short-staffed and dependent upon a few individuals in Hillbrow. Uniquely, the eKhaya Neighbourhood Coordinator would be the Area Coordination Champion, with experience building long-standing, diverse relationships and motivating impactful projects. As a 'one-person-show,' their capacity is stretched unsustainably, yet the eKhaya Board has been unable to hire more staff. However, passionate local champions from all corners of Hillbrow are eager to assist. These groups have strong communication strategies, mainly over WhatsApp.

Unlike other SPRINT Lab sites, El Kero Park site has one clear project upon which to layer mentorship and CDF support. Through JDA's Our City Our Block (OCOB) programme, eKhaya and partners submitted a proposal to the JDA to upgrade the park and a design was developed through a co-production workshop. JDA will continue to support the partners through funding allocation and construction, while they will commit to activating, maintaining and protecting the park. Like all JDA programmes, OCOB only funds the built environment intervention; operational budget will not be available through the programme (Loots, 2018:20). JDA must still appoint a Community Participation Consultant for the project.

The top three risks to area coordination and area-based management at El Kero include the hijacked Vanin Court building; insufficient operations, maintenance and management funding; and the lack of time available to JDA staff to support (despite their deep desire to do so). Funding has not been made available for social interventions and activation of El Kero Park.

ORGANISATIONAL READINESS: EKHAYA NEIGHBOURHOOD

The eKhaya Neighbourhood Improvement District (hereafter, "eKhaya") started in 2004 in the former Special Ratings Area called eKhaya in Hillbrow, to develop conventional CID management and work towards social cohesion and trust in response to fear and criminal behaviour. Central to the vision of eKhaya is a regeneration of the neighbourhood by shifting property owners' traditional perspective of urban management to a bottom-up and socially inclusive approach to community mobilisation.

The organisation operates through the efforts and relationships of the only staff member of the organization, the Neighbourhood Coordinator, who oversees many partnerships and structures. They work with several board members who provide support in decision-making and organisational policy development; but most of the financial and operations management, budgeting and planning is led by the Coordinator. They are mentored by the founder of the organisation. Oversight will be provided by the non-profit Urban Space Management (USM). Although the Coordinator is a highly capable community leader, they require additional manpower on the ground; however, the eKhaya Board has not yet found additional human resources.

eKhaya's success lies in the buy-in and financial contribution of local businesses, property owners and housing companies. eKhaya offers a holistic approach, as it acknowledges the impact of gender, local community dynamics, education, and crime. Further, it has linked its urban management strategy to livelihoods support and rehabilitation, through the MES Programme.



eKhaya has established unique linkages throughout the neighbourhood. Based on the relationships of the Coordinator, an informal network of NGOs, civil society stakeholders and local institutions are intensely engaged. These networks ensure the needs of residents are identified and remain central to eKhaya's efforts. eKhaya addresses issues of safety, security and cleanliness throughout the area, coordinating communication between Bad Boyz/Nemesis Security, the MES cleaning programme, Hope Fountain School and other schools, local businesses, Outreach Foundation, Hillbrow Theatre for Youth, police, property owners and housing managers. Thanks to the efforts of eKhaya, social housing agencies and other affordable housing developments in the neighbourhood work together and share ideas at all levels. eKhaya has managed to establish a strong organisational culture within the network through partnership, ownership, relationship-building, conflict management and high levels of commitment.

Due to the Neighbourhood Coordinator's relationship with the community, they are ready to lead the development of El Kero Park. In 2020, VPUU observed that eKhaya is a self-reliant and innovative organisation with a history of work within a CoJ partnership. For partnership around El Kero Park to work, eKhaya requires more human resources to manage the financial and project oversight of the CDF.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIES



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Current ECD interventions near El Kero Park include pre-school at Hope Fountain Combined School and further-flung schools in Hillbrow. The El Kero Park design also includes play spaces for younger children. Implementing improved and age-targeted support programmes, such as the play-as-you-go area in the design, will provide “children with the opportunity to interact with the different urban elements” in and around the site (Mashabane Rose, 2020). Layering fatherhood programming onto the site may support fathers’ involvement in their children’s upbringing.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

eKhaya Park, near El Kero, mostly caters for male-orientated recreation, such as boys’ soccer. Therefore, the new park is earmarked for more female-oriented activity – with Madulammoho and JHC building residents and Hope Fountain School learners as the nearest beneficiaries. The El Kero Park design includes a netball/multifunctional court, with security patrols to ensure girl children’s safety. Partners of eKhaya Neighbourhood Improvement District will likely provide targeted youth culture and sports programmes in the park as well.



EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME-GENERATING DEVELOPMENT

The spatial design will allow for informal traders to operate around the park, including a car wash business in upgraded parking bays. VPUU observed that the eKhaya Neighbourhood network has the capacity to contribute to a CoJ-led Informal Trading Plan for the neighbourhood, into which trading at El Kero could be embedded. Other as-yet unfunded employment that will take place around the site will include existing security guard positions at Bad Boyz Security and cleaner positions in the MES Programme.



COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

Identified civil society stakeholders in El Kero include: Bad Boyz, Nemisis, Hillbrow Boxing Gym, Hillbrow Theatre, Zee’s Academy, MES, Outreach Foundation, Hope Fountain Combined School, Hands of Mercy, Madulammoho Development Agency, Johannesburg Housing Company and Trafalgar. The development of the park will rely on their relationships with the eKhaya Neighbourhood Coordinator. WhatsApp groups serve as the main method of communication with community members. The main challenge to community mobilisation around El Kero is the lack of a CoJ-appointed Community Participation Consultant.



COMMUNITY DELIVERY OF SERVICES (CDS)

eKhaya Neighbourhood’s largest CDS programme, MES, offers three-month stipend positions and skills training to 15 volunteers for public cleaning and landscaping. MES is meant to be a launchpad to permanent employment but volunteers struggle to find jobs afterwards, especially during COVID-19. The programme cannot hire more than 15 people at a time, although 200 apply for each round. Other CDS positions include live-in Housing Managers, security guards and recreational coordinators. CoJ also has local contracting policies for SMMEs and has EPWP funds for parks activation.



URBAN MANAGEMENT

Urban management is CoJ’s responsibility, but sometimes eKhaya deploys MES to fill in where CoJ cannot. Clear stakeholders for the El Kero Area Coordinating Team (ACT) include the core team from CoJ, plus the eKhaya Neighbourhood partners who submitted to OCOB. The ACT would be a vehicle for them to coordinate implementation. To start, when JDA and the eKhaya Neighbourhood Coordinator plan for precinct management in early 2021, they must include risk mitigation; regular ACT meetings; integrated budgeting; financial sustainability; and support to informal traders.



PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

El Kero Park fits within broader spatial frameworks, including a sports node, home-to-school routes, and the *City Transformation Plan*. The original park concept came from Madulammoho tenants who wanted a safe space for women and girls. Through OCOB, design consultancy Mashabane Rose Associates held a workshop to develop the El Kero Design Report, incorporating crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). With a CPC, community mobilisation could be nurtured through remaining park development, ideally to encourage social interventions and children's active roles.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Risk factors at El Kero include the hijacked Vanin Court building, drugs, phone robbery, and poverty. The Bad Boyz/Nemesis Security Company are compassionate, trusted first responders to these issues, effectively patrolling public and private facilities and monitoring CCTV across Hillbrow. They join JMPD and the CPF on the Inner Jozi Safety Forum. Their relationship with SAPS is still developing. As VPUU observed in neighbouring eKhaya Park, access control measures will put public safety at odds with accessibility in El Kero Park; intentional safety through activation may address this tension.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

SAPS provides support to victims of crimes at police stations, with social workers onsite. Multiple data sources frame legal and justice interventions, including SAPS crime statistics, data from CoJ's Customer Satisfactory Surveys and Safety Audits, and other CoJ information. Even though these frameworks exist, little has been done to improve neighborhood-level informal justice structures and legal mainstreaming and prevention. Some NGOs, including eKhaya and its partner MES, assist in the reintegration of prisoners back in to society.



PROGRAMME PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND M&E

The El Kero concept came from eKhaya Neighbourhood and partners; within the OCOB project, this consortium will carry out much of the planning and management of the park. Meanwhile, M&E will fall to CoJ, which may measure impact based on citizens' safety, according to the aims of the JCSS. CoJ acknowledges the need for ongoing tracking (carried out via surveys) and digital tools to measure, track and address grassroots-level safety issues. The JCSS includes long- and short-term outcomes to guide safety programme planning and management.



INFORMATION SHARING AND MANAGEMENT

Presently, there is no formal communications strategy for El Kero; one may be developed, based upon principles of cooperation and collaboration, within the precinct management plan. Established procedures exist to share information between CoJ and the Ward Councillor, in addition to officials' direct relationship with eKhaya Neighbourhood. Communication goes directly to the Ward Councillor, who then communicates with the community. Information is shared to the community through multiple practices, at a grassroots-level and online. WhatsApp is also used throughout Hillbrow.



RESEARCH AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

In terms of capacity-building, JMPD is committed to ongoing training for ward-based policing. This has not yet reached implementation, but CoJ recognises the need for targeted training, recruitment, ongoing community engagement and the establishment of a more personalised service. Additionally, existing research around the site includes a socioeconomic assessment of Hillbrow conducted by JDA and a study of Parks officials' community engagement conducted by CUBES at Wits. The *El Kero Design Report* also included baseline site mapping and identification of needs through a participatory workshop.

KEY CHALLENGES

Over the next five months, CoJ and community members have the opportunity to strengthen their partnership on El Kero Park by working together on two key challenges.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The first challenge on which to collaborate could be re-invigorating the park development process among community members. Although most of the other OCOB sites have a Community Participation Consultant (CPC) appointed to strengthen municipal-community collaboration, an appointment was not finalised for El Kero Recreational Park. As such, many community members that VPUU engaged with during the site visits were either unaware of the future park development, or had only discussed it once, during a workshop with Mashabane Rose in February 2020. The next steps in the process will be more robust if JDA, JCSP, CTSP and the eKhaya Neighbourhood Co-ordinator are able to re-visit that discussion with the community, provide regular updates and collect information from local experts (residents), and open up more opportunities for co-design in the park's activation plans, which may be reflected in the Management Model. A Community Action Plan (CAP) process for these engagements could increase ownership among park users and activators and bring more community members into the process outside of the eKhaya Neighbourhood network. The CAP would also provide a foundation for a community safety plan and plans to ensure that the capital investment of the city is sustained through operations, maintenance and management after implementation.



ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

In particular, workshop-type community engagements that allow JDA to establish a pre-construction "women and girls baseline" would allow for measurement of the park's post-construction impact on the targeted beneficiary population. A general socioeconomic baseline was established through the impact assessment done in 2018, and the mapping workshop by Mashabane Rose established a spatial use baseline. However, further information about the park's target group themselves is still needed. This baseline could only happen in the next few months before construction starts. It would need to establish the key criteria, frequency and methodology for future assessments measuring the impact of the park for women and girls. Such a baseline could also increase the buy-in from the community for activating the park and guide the communications strategy that will be needed, by encouraging users to envision how they will interact with the space. This will be important to the eKhaya Neighbourhood partners after construction.

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