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First conference of UCT's Safety & Violence Initiative draws global experts

The first conference of the Safety and Violence Initiative (SaVI) at the University of Cape Town, titled "Promoting Safety, Reducing Violence, Raising Awareness", took place on 8 and 9 September 2011 in Cape Town, back-to-back with the World Health Organization (WHO) conference on the 5th Milestones of a Global Campaign for Violence Prevention.

High-profile keynote speakers from the WHO conference also attended the SaVI conference. These speakers included Dr Alexander Butchart and Dr Christopher Mikton of WHO, who provided an overview of global violence prevention and summarised the key evidence in this field. Among the provincial and national government representatives were Dr Gilbert Lawrence of the Western Cape Department of Community Safety, and Dr Shaida Asmall, who represented the National Department of Health.

Established in 2010, SaVI is a university-based research collaboration that aims to develop interdisciplinary research that will contribute to promoting safety, reducing violence and raising awareness about these issues.

Conference presentations reflected a range of different disciplines and perspectives. The following presentations are but a few of those heard at the SaVI conference:

Muya Koloko (UCT Centre of Film and Media Studies) discussed his work, which analyses the guidelines for classification of video games used by the Film Publication Board of South Africa, focusing particularly on the guidelines used to rate games according to elements such as violence and sexual content.

The impact of the New Firearms Bill, implemented in 2004, on the number of gunshots of children in Cape Town was discussed by **Prof Sebastian van As** (Trauma Unit, Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital). His study revealed a significant reduction in the number of children with a firearm-related injury since the introduction of the bill.

Richard Matzopolous (Medical Research Council and UCT School of Public Health and Family Medicine) discussed the injury profile at the Elsies River Community Health Centre. One of the findings was that alcohol featured prominently as a risk factor for injury. Violence, and alcohol-related violence in particular, was concentrated in a handful of areas within Elsies River and these areas revealed a higher density of informal liquor outlets.

Dr Floretta Boonzaier (UCT Department of Psychology) focused on her work on representations of violence against women. She highlighted that violence against women does not occur in a vacuum; instead, it occurs under certain circumstances that make it possible. These include social and collective spaces that condone violence and community norms about violence. Her current work examines the collective narratives about intimate partner violence in a low-income, semi-rural community in the Western Cape.

Sarah Crawford Browne (Primary Healthcare Directorate) spoke about mapping women's perceptions of the factors that influence violence in a Cape Flats community.

Prof Lillian Artz (Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit) discussed the possibility of a new theoretical framework for understanding criminal offending, based on findings from a study on incarcerated women in South Africa.

Julie Berg (UCT Centre of Criminology) discussed design principles for more effective security governance and urban safety in South Africa.