

7 Passes at forefront of positive change

■ Fran Kirsten

The Seven Passes Initiative in Touwsrauten is excited to be working in conjunction with the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) during 2016 in providing four programmes to promote positive parenting within its community.

The focus of these programmes will be on the four stages of a child's life, starting with pregnancy through to the teenage years. "The programmes will therefore play a crucial role in helping parents and children to form a warm, loving bond as well as teaching constructive communication," explained Wilmi Dippenaar, The Seven Passes Initiative director.

The project, with funding from the World Childhood Foundation, will operate in the community of Touwsrauten. It will determine if a community-driven public awareness campaign, combined with parenting programmes, will improve parenting and promote child safety across the whole village.

"These kinds of partnerships, which bring together policy research organisations, academic institutions and organisations that implement programmes, are essential to developing interventions that actually work," said Catherine Ward, associate professor at the Department of Psychology at UCT. "The challenge is to determine how to take programmes that have been shown through testing to be effective, to scale."

The Touwsrauten project is part of a broader effort by the ISS and UCT to address crime and violence through parenting support programmes that the state can implement nationally. In 2014, their efforts contributed to parenting support being included as a policy priority for the



The Seven Passes Initiative's parenting programme facilitators. From left are: Amelia King, Chandré Gould (The Seven Passes CEO and ISS senior researcher), Shannen Buys, Lisa Kleyn and Roslynn Damons. Photo: Fran Kirsten

Western Cape Government. The ISS and UCT also helped the provincial government to develop a high-level implementation strategy and budget for parenting support across the province.

"The safety and happiness of many South African children are undermined by violence in their homes and communities. We believe parents can develop positive, non-violent skills to help them keep their children safe

in and outside of the home," explained Chandré Gould, senior research fellow at the ISS and CEO of The Seven Passes Initiative.

Gould hopes these parenting programmes will have the same positive effect as other Seven Passes initiatives have had. "We have noticed that the youth on youth violence in our community has reduced after we set out to address the problem by training homework facilitators from within the

community. The homework programme enabled the youth to recognise their own value."

The project involves a variety of activities, from establishing a community-based brand of positive parenting to delivering evidence-based positive parenting programmes. If the approach is shown to be effective, the project will offer a model for similar projects in other communities in future.