

## **Executive Summary: FCS research**

In response to the restructuring of the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units (FCS Units) of the South African Police Service (SAPS) in 2006, RAPCAN undertook a research project aimed at assessing the impact of the restructuring on services to victims, and reviewing these developments in the context of international trends.

The research project undertaken in 2007/08 undertook workshops in the nine provinces involving SAPS personnel, other government departments providing related services as well as civil society organisations with a view to obtaining a view of the status of FCS services since the restructuring, and the central strengths and weaknesses of services both before and after the restructuring. These workshops also obtained the views of participants on what high quality FCS services should look like and how the quality of these services should be monitored. An extensive literature review was also conducted. This provided data on how such services are conducted in comparable countries, with a view to assessing SAPS policy in the context of international developments and trends.

### ***Key findings:***

The decision taken by the SAPS to restructure its FCS Units, and redeploy personnel to cluster and station level had a profound effect on the nature of services delivered to victims as well as on the personnel that provide these services. Generally, the findings reflect that the trajectory towards increased specialisation in FCS cases that was apparent before the restructuring has been reversed by the decision to restructure. There is no longer a national pattern that demonstrates dedicated officers, dedicated resources, and specialised management for cases within the FCS mandate.

#### **Before the Restructuring:**

- The service consisted of a mix of FCS and Child Protection Units with varying approaches to addressing the full mandate of the Unit. Units served relatively small, primarily urban, sections of the country, although some rural areas also received services.
- These services focused only on cases within the FCS mandate, while Units in some provinces acted only in relation to parts of the mandate.
- The nature of the FCS service was becoming more sophisticated. This was noted in terms of the introduction of forensic social workers in some provinces (Western Cape etc.)
- FCS officers were specifically selected for the job, and most often also received specialised training. FCS officers actively applied to work in the Units, making career path decisions to specialise in this area of investigations. Officers could plan career paths within the specialised Unit.
- Officers were managed and supervised by detectives with often significant experience in these investigation of cases with the FCS mandate
- There was generally a high level of commitment to the job, notwithstanding high levels of job stress and some resource constraints.
- Some provinces seemed to be vastly more resourced than others in terms of number of personnel as well the nature of personnel available (e.g. the Western Cape).
- Units had dedicated resources. These included: office premises that were separate from the SAPS stations, vehicles, appropriate rooms for the interviewing of victims, communications

infrastructure (i.e. telephones, mobile phones, Internet connectivity, computers, administrative staff, etc.).

- FCS Units were allocated budgets which were managed in terms of the needs and priorities of the Units. This included funds to support overtime work undertaken.

After the Restructuring:

- The service continues to consist of a mix across the country, again with great variations in relation to the cases addressed in relation to the full mandate of the Unit.
- The geographical distribution of the service seems to have been extended into some new rural areas, however, in some cases, this seems to have been at the expense of the some areas that were previously covered. The new cluster-level system was resulted in officers having to cover smaller geographical areas than previously required.
- Officers in some provinces (i.e. North West, Mpumalanga) reported no longer being dedicated to the investigation of cases in the FCS mandate, but also being required to investigate other cases.
- The inter-sectoral relationships required for the delivery of services were reported to have been disrupted and in one case, to have collapsed due to the restructuring.
- FCS officers brought into the system as part of the restructuring process did not seem to have undergone any specific selection or screening processes such as psychometric tests. Officers seem to have been deployed into FCS work without specifically choosing this area of work.
- New officers had not undergone specialist FCS training. Some may have received detective training. Some newly deployed staff did not have driver's licences (Northern Cape). The statement-taking skills of new officers were raised as a problem in KwaZulu-Natal and North West.
- FCS officers were managed and supervised by Heads of Detectives at station or cluster level (except in the Western Cape). Reportedly, few of these had an understanding of FCS cases.
- As a result of the restructuring, officers in four provinces (i.e. Eastern Cape, Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga) reporting levels of uncertainty, demoralisation, and apathy.
- Generally, resources allocated to the specialised Units were devolved to station and cluster level, although there are some exceptions (e.g. Western Cape, the Port Elizabeth area).
- Generally, FCS services in provinces no longer had dedicated separate facilities which could be utilised for working with victims. Where FCS services are now located in premises that used to house FCS Units, some special facilities are still available them such as victim-friendly rooms (e.g. Eastern Cape). Generally services are delivered out of SAPS stations, rather than other facilities that may be more appropriate for victims.
- FCS officers were deployed to new areas where no specialised resources such as victim-friendly rooms were available. Some provinces reported that telephones and computers were no longer dedicated to FCS work.
- FCS services no longer have their own identifiable budgets. Issues relating to funds for the service were reported to be unclear as even stations and clusters could not explain how services were to be funded, and how resourcing should be motivated for.

Key conclusions:

- The current system of delivery of FCS services represents a reversal in historical developments in South Africa aimed at offering a skilled, specialised service to complainants in FCS-related cases that are premised on dedicated resourcing, specialised training and specialised management.

- The current structure for the provision of FCS services is unable to offer continued specialisation of officers nationally, dedicated resourcing, and specialised management and oversight of FCS cases.
- The policy objective to prioritise crimes against women and children cannot be realised under the current structure.
- The current situation represents an absence of political will in government and in SAPS in relation to the prioritisation of victims, especially in terms to crimes against women and children. Services have been devolved to local level without an articulated national strategy, specialised management and oversight, and dedicated budgets and resources.
- The decision by the SAPS to devolve all area level services to cluster and station level did not take adequate account of the nature of FCS services, and the impact of the restructuring on the quality of services.
- The process of restructuring in 2006 (which affected all the provinces except for the Western Cape) resulted in confusion and uncertainty both internally in the SAPS and externally among civil society organisations, other government service-providers and the general public due to significant weaknesses in SAPS communications. This effect was felt also in the Western Cape where no restructuring took place during that period.
- The restructuring resulted in the placement of FCS staff in service-delivery positions that: (1) were not suitably trained, (2) were not suitably experienced, (3) did not undergo special screening or selection, (4) had not specifically elected to work on FCS cases, (5) did not have some of the basic requirements to undertake the job e.g. driver's licences.
- The process of restructuring, which included the redeployment of existing FCS personnel, resulted in demoralisation and demotivation on the part of FCS officers.
- The restructuring in 2006 resulted in a weakening of the quality of services provided nationally, accompanied by some increase in access to services.
- South Africa is out of step with comparable poor and middle income countries in the world in effectively shifting away from specialised services.
- South Africa's government is out of step with developments in some comparable countries which have demonstrated significant political leadership in relation to responding to crimes against women and children.
- South Africa is out of step with comparable countries in relation to the creativity applied to addressing the some of the crime problems within the FCS mandate.
- Inter-sectoral collaboration with stakeholders required to deliver essential services to victims has suffered due to the restructuring.
- Victims have been impacted negatively through the process of the restructuring and are currently exposed to services of questionable quality in many areas.
- The current approach to measuring the effectiveness of services needs to be reviewed, especially in terms of reducing reporting

The following recommendations are made:

- The government as a whole needs to provide political and strategic leadership in relation to the imperative to respond more effectively to victimisation. In an environment with high levels of victimisation, and where specific policy exists to prioritise certain crime categories, the ongoing critical review of strategies to implement policy is essential.
- The SAPS needs to recognise that its restructuring plans were flawed, specifically in relation to their impact on FCS services and accept that remedial actions will need to be taken. This is necessary to restore public confidence in the SAPS, and particularly in its commitment to prioritising crimes against women and children.

- The SAPS needs to undertake a revision of the current structure for the delivery of FCS services. The focus should be on ensuring a continued increase in access to services, with a concomitant focus in ensuring the quality of these services. In all likelihood, this will require a shift away from station and cluster-level management to a more centralised management of the service, notwithstanding the location of the service at a more local level.
- The SAPS should develop and publicise a national plan for the delivery of this service, which adopts a short to medium-term orientation. This is also necessary for the restoration of public confidence in the SAPS's commitment to serving victims. This plan should set out a strategy for the achievement of high quality services at an increasingly broader scale. The requirements of such a plan are as follows:
  - The plan should reflect the SAPS prioritisation of the FCS mandate and demonstrate commitment to its implementation through budgets and oversight measures.
  - There should be processes at provincial level for consultation with civil society organisations and other government partners *prior* to the plan being finalised. One of the objectives of this exercise should also be to establish systems for ongoing communication and cooperation with civil society organisations, including their involvement in monitoring FCS services.
  - Consultations with the public should be held in all the provinces.
  - The plan should map the current demand for services based on crime reporting nationally, as well as the current situation in relation to specialised personnel, budgets and resourcing for such services.
  - The plan should demonstrate a strategy and budget to incrementally increase access to the service nationally.
  - This should be accompanied by plans for the selection and training of personnel, and budgets for this.
  - The plan should include standards in terms of resourcing to all FCS services and an incremental strategy for the provision of these resources (with accompanying budgets).
  - A structure and strategy for the monitoring of the quality of services nationally should be included. This should include the utilisation of indicators that are established through consultation with the public and civil society organisations.
  - The plan must include a process for regular (at least annual) reporting to the public on the achievement of objectives.