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## **UCT students weigh in on men's role in addressing gender-based violence in South Africa**

Research from lobby group, Sonke Gender Justice, shows that the impact of gender-based violence has been estimated to cost South Africa up to R42.4 billion per year. It also reports that the Western Cape is one of the most unsafe provinces in South Africa. A third of the country's murders are reported to police stations in this province.

Within this grim context, University of Cape Town (UCT) students engaged with young men, ex-offenders and the non-governmental sector to better understand the situation and respond adequately.

Finding solutions to gender-based violence is complex but the students were up for the challenge during a recent d-school Foundation Programme in Design Thinking.

The d-school, or Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking at UCT, runs the Foundation Programme every semester and gathers students from various faculties for 12 weeks to tackle real world problems.

Rob Kellas, the d-school programme manager who worked with the students for 12 weeks, said students were initially "very anxious about tackling such a complex social challenge".

Using design thinking tools and principles, the recent group of students considered how men could play a role in combating the continued violence against women and girls in South Africa.

Solutions included starting a mentoring programme for young men as well as an innovative book series for pre-school boys to show them alternatives to violence they may be exposed to at home.

"The students were honest with each other, communicated their concerns and created a safe space for each other," said Kellas.

Students met twice a week at the d-school's creative studio at the UCT Graduate School of Business. They worked with project partner, United Nations Women and met with Sonke Gender Justice.

Innes Simbi from Rwanda, who has a master's degree in chemical engineering, said the design thinking process helped them to think "more about social impact and changing the world".

"In my field, you don't need to be involved with people. It has been very interesting for me to be working with people," said Innes.

The next Foundation Programme in Design Thinking runs from 25 February to 24 May 2019. It is open to all students registered at tertiary institutions across South Africa. The application deadline is 27 January.

[Apply online](#)

***ENDS***

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