



Gun Free South Africa  
**2020-2021**  
**Annual Report**



# Peace means...

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Living in a world of violence, peace means many things

Peace means gangs raising the white flag

Peace means being able to walk freely at night

Peace means not having a fear of who is next?

Peace means not sitting next to a classmate with a gun

Peace means peers not dropping out of school

Peace means young men don't join gangs to escape poverty

Peace means little boys don't hide guns for gang leaders

Peace means safe schools

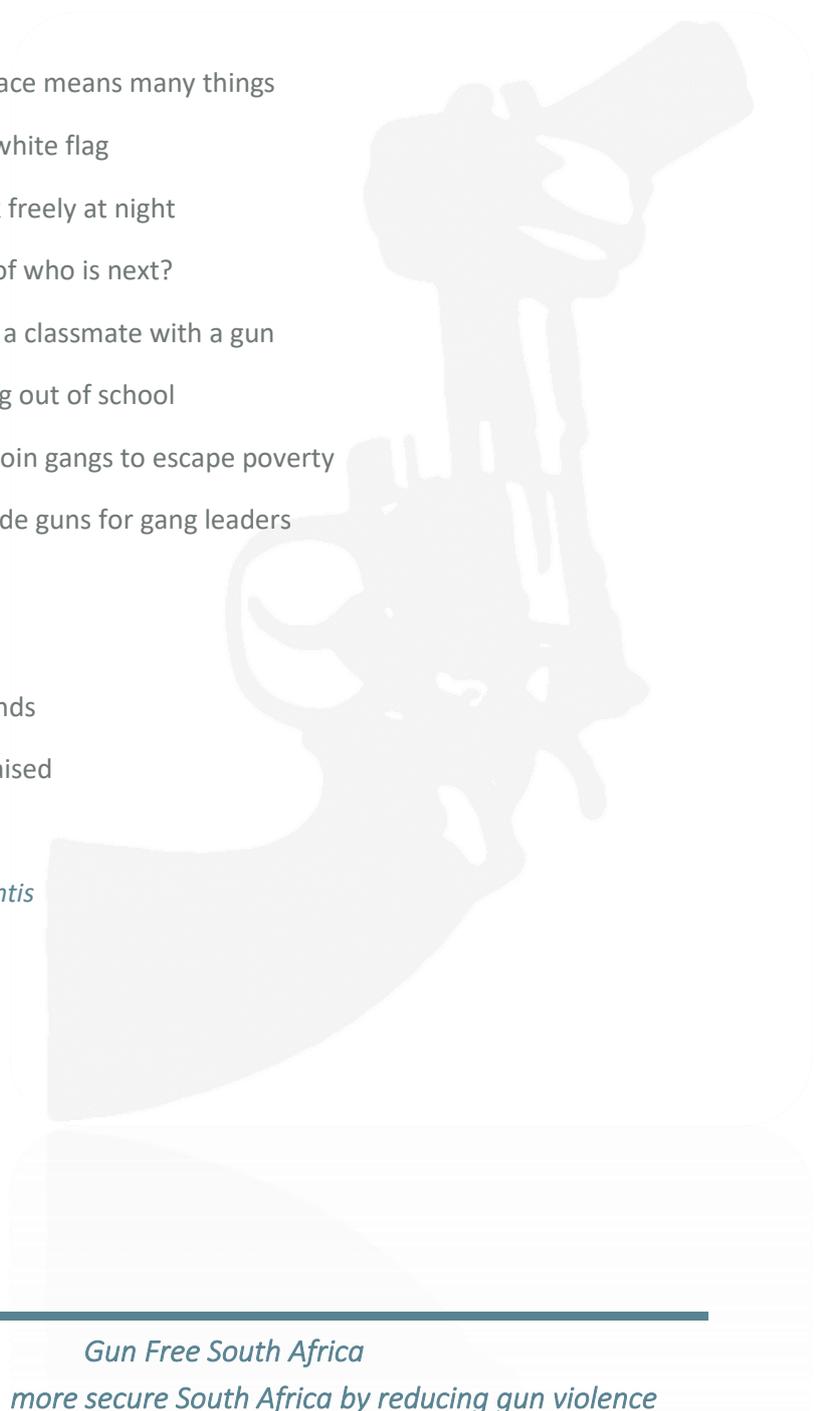
Peace means safe areas

Peace means the endless war ends

Peace means the white flag is raised

That's what peace means to me

*Temica Bonn, youth activist, Atlantis*



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*Gun Free South Africa*

*Creating a safer, more secure South Africa by reducing gun violence*

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# Acronyms

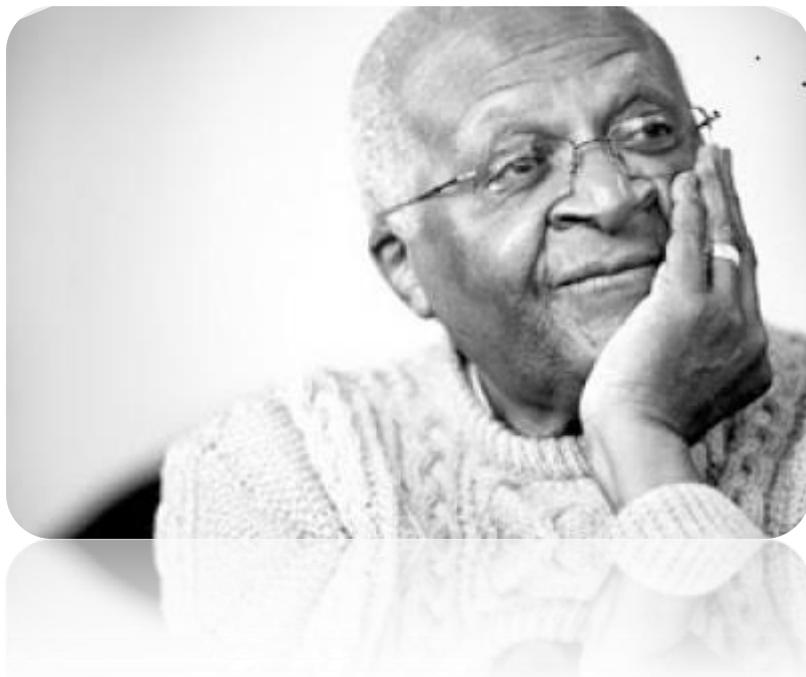
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ANC	African National Congress
ARWG	C-19 Anti-Repression Working Group
C19-PC	COVID-19 People's Coalition
FCA	Firearms Control Act (2000)
GBV	Gender-based violence
GFSA	Gun Free South Africa
GFZ	Gun Free Zone
IANSA	International Action Network on Small Arms
LGBTI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
MP	Member of parliament
NGO	Non-government organisation
SA	South Africa
SAPS	South African Police Service
SCA	Supreme Court of Appeal
USA	United States of America
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
YES	Youth Employment Service



## In memory

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### “Real peace never comes from the barrel of a gun”

GFSA patron Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

7 October 1931 – 26 December 2021

It was with great regard and sadness that GFSA marked the passing of our beloved patron, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu.

The Arch, who himself admitted that he couldn't, and wouldn't shut up in the face of injustice, was a moral compass for the world, who lived his values with courage and conviction.

A globally respected peacemaker, Tutu recognised that “real peace never comes from the barrel of a gun”.

He was a committed supporter of a gun free South Africa, calling for SA's first democratic election to be gun free, supporting SA's first national firearms amnesty on 16 December 1994, and becoming a patron of GFSA soon after the organisation was established in 1995.

His commitment to silencing the guns was not limited to South Africa: In 2018 the Arch awarded the International Children's Peace Prize to the Parkland students in the USA for establishing an international movement after a deadly school shooting. Presenting the award, Tutu called the March For Our Lives movement one of the most significant youth-led mass movements in living memory and its founders “true change-makers”.

Tutu's wisdom, energy, and belief in silencing the guns for peace will live on in GFSA as we work to create a safer, more secure country, where the guns are silent.

# Letter from the chair

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Through Organisational **ADAPTION**, Community **ACTIVISM** and Policy **ADVOCACY**, GFSA was able to help raise the voice of the unarmed majority in South Africa in 2020 and 2021.

The voices are loud and the message is clear: “Silence the guns”.

The urgency of this message is underscored in the spate of gun massacres that have recently ripped through communities. The resultant media attention has brought into focus a change in SA’s gun violence pattern: More people being shot in public places, more shootings in which multiple people are shot, and more people being shot multiple times.

As South Africa reels from the horror of these massacres, we have focused on possible motives to understand why so many people, mostly young black men, are being shot.

While speculating we must not ignore the fact that 23 people are shot and killed every day in South Africa. The why of these daily gun deaths varies widely – political assassinations, taxi route feuds, GBV, robbery-related murders, gang shootouts, organised crime, arguments.

While the why of shootings varies, what all these murders have in common is a gun. Every single person shot and killed would be alive if there wasn’t a gun available.

Guns are designed to kill. And they are doing just this – at an increasing rate. In late 2010 SA started seeing a rise in gun deaths, from 18 people shot dead a day in 2009 to 23 a day in 2021.

Guns are now the leading cause of murder in South Africa, having overtaken knives and other sharp weapons.

This rise in gun violence coincides with an increase in the flow of guns into communities.

In a post-COVID-19 world, gun violence, including massacres, is likely to rise as gun availability grows: With rising crime, a weak criminal justice system, proposed amendments to strengthen gun controls, as well as forceful marketing by the firearms industry that guns are effective for self-defence, gun dealers in South Africa are reporting a surge in gun sales, particularly since the July 2021 unrest.

The USA saw a similar surge in gun sales in 2020 and 2021, as millions of guns were bought for protection in response to socio-economic devastation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and protests linked to the presidential election.

Research in the USA has already linked pandemic gun sales to an increase in gun-related deaths in that country.

At the heart of the domestic arms race is the myth that guns are effective for self-defence. There is no evidence anywhere in the world that more guns make people safer. There is overwhelming evidence that guns do not help build safer communities.

Reducing gun availability through stricter controls is central to creating a safer, more secure South Africa. Moves to tighten gun control will be met with vocal opposition from a small minority. But gun violence reduction is not about compromise, it is about public safety. In looking at ways to reduce gun violence, the priority must be the unarmed majority who are calling for guns to be silenced.

Yolande Baker  
Chairperson



# Adaptation

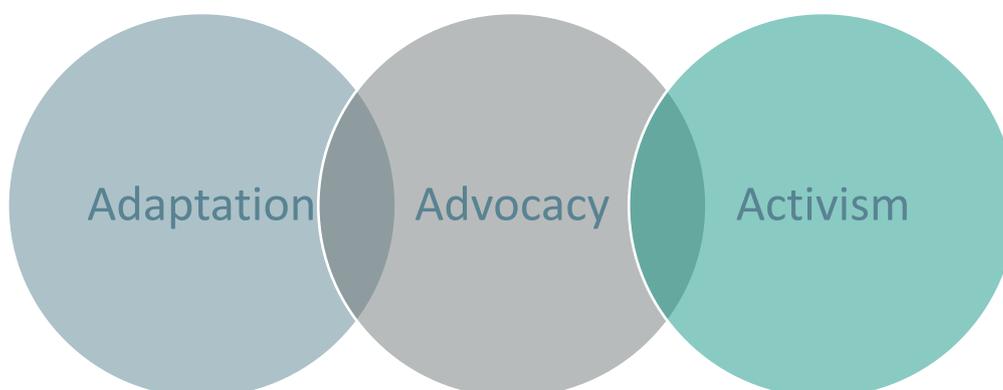
**Adapted to COVID-19:** The GFSA team successfully navigated the COVID-19 pandemic. Through reflection and intention, we experimented with ways of working to support the team and the work that we do. A key output was an online *Silence the guns* campaign which both built the team's knowledge and skills and helped raise public awareness on over 30 gun-related issues, including gun control policies, the risks of gun ownership, the impact of gun violence and evidence-based interventions to save lives by reducing gun violence.

# Activism

**Youth activist training:** 23 people are shot and killed every day in South Africa, with the highest homicide rates found in the 15–29 years age group. In 2020-21 GFSA focused on strengthening the capacity of young people to become activists for community safety in their communities, and contribute to policies aimed at reducing gun violence. Ten young people from Gauteng and the Western Cape undertook a year-long *Hero's Journey* towards activism in 2021.

# Advocacy

**Firearms Control Amendment Bill:** The GFSA team, particularly our youth activists, put their knowledge, skills and activist training into practice when a draft amendment to the Firearms Control Act (2000) was published in 2021. Over a ten week period the team mobilised significant sectors within civil society to engage with the draft Bill. This resulted in 1,250 submissions being made on central issues of concern for community members, including raising the age for gun ownership to 25 years and significantly limiting the number of guns and rounds of ammunition any one person can own.



## The Context

GFSA's work to build a safer South Africa by reducing gun violence was significantly impacted by the context in which we work. In 2020 the COVID-19 global pandemic hit, and South Africa's government responded by implementing some of the strictest lockdowns in the world. While violent crime rates declined during lockdowns, the proportion of gun violence increased in this time and violent crime, which increasingly involves guns, overtook pre-pandemic levels as restrictions eased. This, coupled with police repression and brutality, especially in poor and marginalised communities and particularly during the COVID-19 lockdowns, as well as growing evidence of police fraud and corruption, contributed to high levels of fear and low levels of trust in the ability of the police to keep us safe.

Within this context a draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill was published in May 2021, which proposed prohibiting firearms for self-defence. In mid-July, three weeks before the deadline for submissions on the draft Bill ended, violent unrest took place across KwaZulu-Natal and in parts of Gauteng, with armed civilians a key feature.

All these factors highlighted a key question confronting GFSA, how can we keep ourselves safe? It is one short step to thinking that the only solution is to get a gun for self-protection, and indeed, gun dealers have reported a surge in gun sales, particularly since the July unrest.

This context has been extremely challenging for the entire GFSA team to navigate as we engage with community members' fear of crime and distrust in the police, work with the evidence which overwhelmingly shows that more guns do not make us safer, and have the confidence to facilitate tough conversations on these issues. This has been particularly difficult for the GFSA youth team, and they have experienced peer pressure as well as online bullying and sometimes threats when moving about in their local communities: We are accused of "being naïve", "disarming law-abiding citizens", and "not having alternatives".

### WHY IS GUN VIOLENCE INCREASING IN SA?

There are many factors that protect a country from violence. These include socio-economic equality, effective policing and criminal justice systems, political accountability, welfare safety nets, comprehensive education systems and cultures of trust.

Where these factors are weak or failing, as in SA, the risk of violence increases.

The ready availability of guns makes violence more deadly. Guns are designed to kill, and the increasing flood of guns and ammunition into our country since late 2010 means more gun violence.

Currently 23 people are shot and killed every day in South Africa.

Most gun violence is committed with illegal guns, but almost all illegal guns were once legal before being leaked into criminal hands.

Poor implementation of SA's Firearms Control Act by the state and poor compliance by gun owners have contributed to rising gun numbers, and rising gun violence nationally.

Examples of poor implementation and compliance that have increased the availability of guns and ammunition in SA include exploiting loopholes in the law to accumulate guns and ammunition; fraud and corruption by all stakeholders in the firearms chain (including the police, gun dealers, trainers, associations and owners); theft of state and civilian guns; and smuggling of firearms, most notably high calibre firearms for use in organised crime.

Throughout this process GFSA has foregrounded two modes of working. Firstly, we base our work on evidence, not anecdotes. Gun ownership is contested, and the only way we can make informed decisions about gun control and reducing gun violence is to use facts, while acknowledging people’s feelings of fear and helplessness. Secondly, we work with partners to lower and prevent overall violence in SA. We do this in recognition that while reducing access to guns will save lives by reducing the deadliness of violence, it will not eradicate it. Violence is complex and needs to be addressed by reducing risk and building protective factors at various levels involving the individual, family, community and country.

## THE JULY UNREST

On 9 July 2021, after former president Jacob Zuma was imprisoned for contempt of court, deadly unrest erupted in parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. More than 340 people died in the week-long violence and looting which cost South Africa's economy more than R50 billion.

GFSA’s approach to the July 2021 unrest was to examine the available information and look for patterns in the circumstances of deaths, types of weapons used, and who was being killed by whom. This unequivocally showed that the presence of significant numbers of guns helped to escalate the confrontation and intensified its deadliness, particularly in Phoenix where both sides of the conflict were armed and willing to shoot and kill. Although in some instances the presence of armed civilians did seem to deter further looting or potential for infrastructure damage, this was a temporary reprieve and only served to displace the violence.

The overall lesson from the July unrest is that the ready availability of guns increased the number of people who were killed.



Phoenix residents during Police Minister Bheki Cele’s visit after the July 2021 unrest. Photo: Twitter/@LirandzuThemba

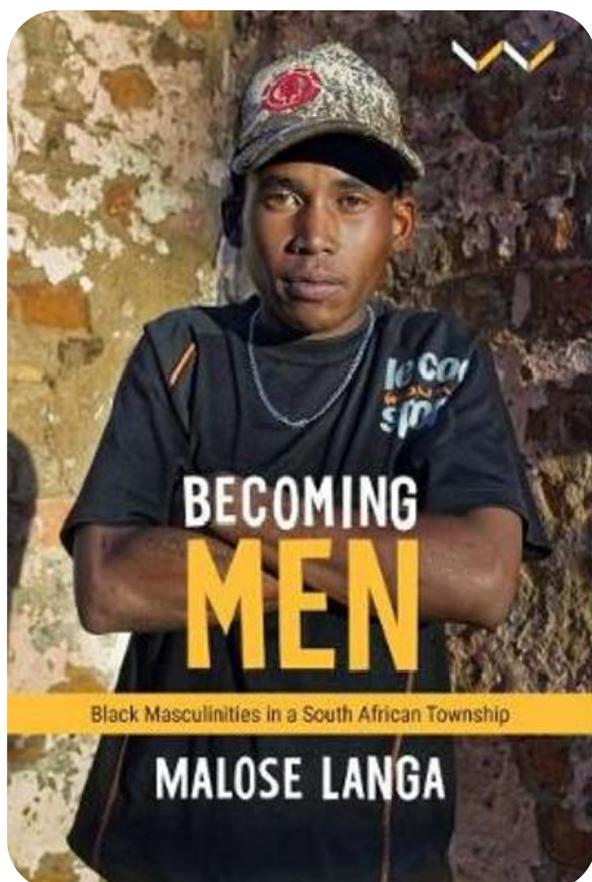
# Organisation ADAPTATION

As the world adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, GFSA appointed an organisational development consultant in July 2020 to help us navigate how best to continue doing our work in a rapidly changing world. With her support we explored how COVID-19 impacted on us as individuals, as a team and on our work. A significant part of this process was ensuring that we were reflective and intentional in how we work.

COVID-19 lockdowns meant that GFSA's face-to-face work stopped. This affected a core focus for 2020-21: Helping build safer communities through youth activism. It also meant that GFSA staff, especially young members and interns who had just joined the team, couldn't physically meet, which risked undermining their sense of belonging. To counter this we set up several online spaces in which to learn and connect, including a book club, a media training course and a *Silence the guns* virtual campaign. These helped build teamwork as well as content knowledge and skills.

## Book club

GFSA's youth team established a weekly book club to connect and interact, exchange ideas, address challenges, and explore solutions.



GFSA Board member Malose Langa's book *Becoming Men* was used in GFSA's book club to discuss a range of issues including violence and toxic masculinity

## Essential skills for media and communications

The GFSA team, including youth interns, registered for a nine-module online course on media and communications held by the Gordon Institute of Business Science. It provided new insights into how we communicate our 'must-airs', and led to GFSA developing a Crisis Communications Policy. It also provided an opportunity for the team to connect and interact on a joint activity at the height of COVID-19 lockdown.



Chris Gibbons. Photo: [www.chrisgibbons.co.za/about/](http://www.chrisgibbons.co.za/about/)

Veteran journalist Chris Gibbons hosted a GIBS online media and communications masterclass, which helped the GFSA team connect and develop media skills

# Adaptation

## SILENCE THE GUNS VIRTUAL CAMPAIGN



SILENCING THE GUNS

This campaign had its genesis in the shocking 2020 New Year’s Melville and Newtown public shootings in which multiple people were shot. In response, GFSA began exploring how to raise awareness of the dangers for a society in which guns are so readily available. The solution was to create visual images combined with facts, figures, and key messages in a campaign to build public awareness on the nature and extent of gun violence in SA, offer some solutions, and imagine a different – safer, more just – society.

The title of the campaign drew on the African Union’s focus for 2020: Silencing the Guns.

Faced with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, which forced us to work completely online, we used the campaign to develop a rich store of our ideas and materials, with a strong emphasis on visual representation. In total the campaign unpacked 30 modules on issues related to gun violence, ranging from understanding the Firearms Control Act and SA’s Constitution regarding gun ownership, to exploring how gun violence differently affects men, women and young people, and imagining a gun free society. Staff members undertook research, developed key messaging and finalised visuals for publication. Each module ran over 7-10 days using a variety of social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and WhatsApp chats.

<p><b>Illegal guns in South Africa</b></p>	<p><b>MURDER 2019-20:</b></p> <p>21,325 people</p> <p>↑ 1.4%</p> <p>35%</p> <p>21%</p>	<p>"The proliferation of illegal firearms remains a major contributor to crime levels in the country."</p> <p><small>Minister of Police, release of 2019-20 crime statistics 31 July 2020</small></p>
<p><b>WHERE DO illegal guns in South Africa come from?</b></p>	<p>Almost all illegal guns were once legal before being leaked into the illegal pool</p>	
<p>The 3 main ways <b>Legal guns leak into illegal pool</b></p>	<p>Reported gun loss/theft in 2018-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civilians: 9002 guns (25 a day)</li> <li>- Police: 607 guns (2 a day)</li> </ul> <p><b>1 LOSS &amp; THEFT</b></p> <p>90% Handguns</p> <p>Lost by or stolen from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civilians: 67%</li> <li>- Police: 12%</li> <li>- Govt dept: 10%</li> <li>- Private security industry: 9%</li> </ul>	
<p>The 3 main ways <b>Legal guns leak into illegal pool</b></p>	<p><b>2 FRAUD &amp; CORRUPTION</b></p> <p>People who are not "fit and proper" to own a gun are issued with firearm certificates, licences, permits or authorisations</p> <p><b>BREAKING NEWS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cop in duck on gun-related fraud charges</li> <li>Gun dealer arrested for illegal gun trading</li> <li>Alleged gang boss to stand trial in guns-to-gangs case</li> </ul>	
<p>The 3 main ways <b>Legal guns leak into illegal pool</b></p>	<p><b>3 SMUGGLED</b></p> <p><b>Into SA</b></p> <p>Research indicates this is low</p> <p><b>Out of SA</b></p> <p>Handguns smuggled to neighbouring countries as neighbours have stricter gun laws</p>	
<p><b>2 actions to STOP legal guns leaking into the illegal pool</b></p>	<p><b>1 RECOVER &amp; DESTROY</b></p> <p><b>2 CONTROL LEGAL GUNS</b></p>	

Silence the guns campaign on illegal guns in SA



# Community ACTIVISM

The two years under review saw a specific focus on building grassroots activism to reduce gun violence in communities.

This work, which mostly involves face-to-face contact to build relationships of trust, was severely impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic and associated lockdowns in SA.

Outside of COVID-19's impact, a significant challenge is that people across South Africa, especially young people living in poor and marginalised communities, are confronted with competing social problems: Extreme levels of inequality, gang violence, GBV, substance abuse, and lack of access to job opportunities divert attention from high levels of gun violence in communities as well as the fact that daily shootings exacerbate social problems.

To help build activism to reduce gun violence, GFSA ran a year-long *Hero's Journey* in 2021.

## Hero's Journey activist training

To capacitate and empower young people to take the lead in building safer communities, GFSA worked with two consultants to develop a year-long youth activist training curriculum.

A cohort of 10 people from Gauteng and the Western Cape were enrolled into the course. With lockdown restrictions eased, training started with a five-day intensive face-to-face session in February 2021, where GFSA's youth cohort and senior staff went on a *Hero's Journey* of personal discovery and what it means to be an activist.

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*The time together gave the youth team an opportunity to understand more fully the purpose of GFSA, its values, and its approach to organising. A big focus of the training was exploring what it means to be an activist, identifying the key attributes of activists and examining participants' own skills and what they bring to activism.*

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Key lessons from GFSA's *Hero's Journey* activist training were summarised in a key ring as a reference and reminder

Being activists in their communities after the five-day training was not easy. Although the team had a deeper insight into themselves, developed a set of skills, enhanced their knowledge on gun control and gun violence-related matters, and had a bag of tools to assist them, finding an entry point to begin working in communities did not come easily: Competing social problems, exacerbated by the global pandemic, make it difficult to foreground addressing gun violence.

Subsequent in-service activist training sessions, mostly online, supported and helped the team continue to grow their skills and learn strategies to develop grit, foster strong strategic partnerships and effectively use social media.

These have been used by the youth team to develop community safety campaigns, which have taken very different shapes in the communities in which we work. In the Western Cape our community work has largely been constituency-based, for example holding dialogues with men on the issue of preventing gun violence or teaching self-defence classes to young women. In Gauteng the approach has involved partnerships with youth crime prevention desks and existing networks, such as the Masiphephe Network in Alexandra.



GfSA's *Hero's Journey* for activism began with a five-day face-to-face training session, which was the first time the GfSA team had been together since the COVID-19 pandemic hit



GfSA Director Adèle Kirsten inspired young activists on the *Hero's Journey* activist training with her activism

## Building safer communities

In 2020-21 GFSA's youth team worked in nine communities: In Gauteng we worked in Alexandra, Ivory Park, Thembisa North and South, and Yeoville and in the Western Cape we worked in Atlantis, Kensington, Melkbosch Village, and Paarl East. 2020-21 highlights in GFSA's youth-led community activism included:

### Raising the voice of women activists

Working with the Swedish development agency IM Sweden, GFSA undertook a small research project to raise the voices of women and LGBTI+ survivors and activists on gun control policy. Interviews with survivors and activists by GFSA staff were included in a report titled *Voices of women: On guns, violence and activism* which reflected on the experiences of survivors and activists in El Salvador, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa. The GFSA team and activists who were interviewed for the project also participated in international webinars to publicise the work.

## Voices of Women On guns, violence and activism



A paper by IM Swedish Development Partner



## This is a Gun Free Zone

*GFSA's Gun Free Zone project is one of the most effective and powerful ways to build safer communities.*

*GFSA worked with various communities in Gauteng and the Western Cape in 2020-21 to introduce and maintain GFZs as safe places, free from the fear of gun violence.*

## A snapshot of community activism

**Freedom Day Talent Show:** Building on from GFSA's 2019 Shooting for the Stars photoshoot, where youngsters in Atlantis were photographed with props to visualise a future without guns, GFSA, together with the Ivory Park youth crime prevention desk, hosted a Freedom Day talent show in 2020. In addition to raising awareness about the dangers of guns in the community, it showed young people that they can get attention in positive ways instead of through crime.

**Gun Free Valentines:** Launched by GFSA to alert women to the risks of a gun in the home, intimate partner violence, and how laws can be used to save lives, #GunFreeValentines has been adopted by IANSA partners across the globe, running from Valentine's Day to 8 March to mark International Women's Day. GFSA undertook outreach activities in 2020 and 2021, including handing out roses with key public education and take action messages.

**9<sup>th</sup> August Women's Day:** More women in SA are killed by their intimate partner than a stranger. To raise awareness of the risks and empower women to take action, we hosted a gloves up, guns down self-defence class for young women in Atlantis and organised an awareness raising march in Alex in August 2021.

**International Youth Day:** On 12 August 2020 GFSA hosted a webinar where several young men engaged with two GFSA board members. Chaired by Yolande Baker, and with input from Malose Langa who reflected on his book, *Becoming Men*, the webinar explored GBV and the role that men can play in its prevention.

**WEAR Orange:** In partnership with IANSA, GFSA ran campaigns focusing on survivors of gun violence, which include those who have been directly injured or threatened with a gun, as well as those who have lost loved ones to gun violence.



For International Peace Day 2021 GFSA hosted a national youth dialogue where young people shared their views on what makes for a peaceful society.

Participants spoke about the importance of silencing the guns for peace, but recognised that without justice, peace will never be realised.

# Activism

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### Photos:

Top: Meeting with Ivory Park youth crime prevention desk, Ivory Park talent show poster, Gun Free Valentines rose handout

Middle: Gun Free Valentines rose handout, Gloves up, guns down self-defence class in Atlantis, Women's Day march in Alex

Bottom: YES interns at Gordon Primary in Alex, Page from Melkbosch Village *Aim for Change* zine, supporting IANSA's Wear Orange campaign

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WANT TO SHOWCASE YOUR TALENT?

# IVORY PARK TALENT SHOW

DATE: 17 APRIL 2021  
 TIME: 10:00AM  
 VENUE: IVORY PARK NORTH HALL

SPECIAL JUDGES ON THE DAY!!!  
**#STOP THE VIOLENCE IN MY COMMUNITY**  
**#iGuniFlop**



## Guns and Me

Because there was a gun/I had to run./ Because there was a gun/I was scared./ Because there wa a gun /I heard shots that blew in the air./ Because there was a gun./ I heard bullets near the store./ Because there was a gun./ I heard bullets soar./ Beause there was a gun everybody had to run.



## Aim for change



In collaboration with IANSA and the Human Centred Design Programme at Algonquin College (Canada), GFSA's youth activists developed the *Aim for Change* campaign, a youth-focused workshop where young people can express their views on issues such as how gun violence affects them, masculine identities, peer pressure and role models.

*Aim for Change* recognises that gun violence is normalised for many youth: It is common for children and young people in SA to stay awake at night to the sound of gunshots outside their homes, or to be tempted to join a gang to feel "like a man". Youth often feel like there is nowhere for them to express how they're feeling about these issues.

*Aim for Change* raises youth's voices through a two-hour workshop designed to share their stories creatively. The end goal of the workshop is for youth participants to make a "zine", an informal magazine or small written publication made up of photographs and handwritten text about a certain topic. Each participant has their own page in the zine, creating enough pages at the end of the workshop to make up a small publication. Youth tell their stories in an engaging way by sharing and expressing themselves through the various art forms available in the workshop.

## GFSA at the UN



GFSA's Mary-Ann Nobele and Monique Hansen spoke about the *Aim for Change* campaign at a side event at the 2021 Seventh Biennial Meeting of States, which was held to consider national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

## Wits Surgical Conference

In response to the public health sector’s interest in going upstream to proactively prevent gun violence instead of just treating survivors, GFSA’s Director Adèle Kirsten made a presentation to the 2020 Biennial Surgical Conference on how best to advocate for gun violence prevention.



## In partnership

A core mode of working for GFSA is collaborating with like-minded organisations. Strategic partnerships in 2020-21 included:

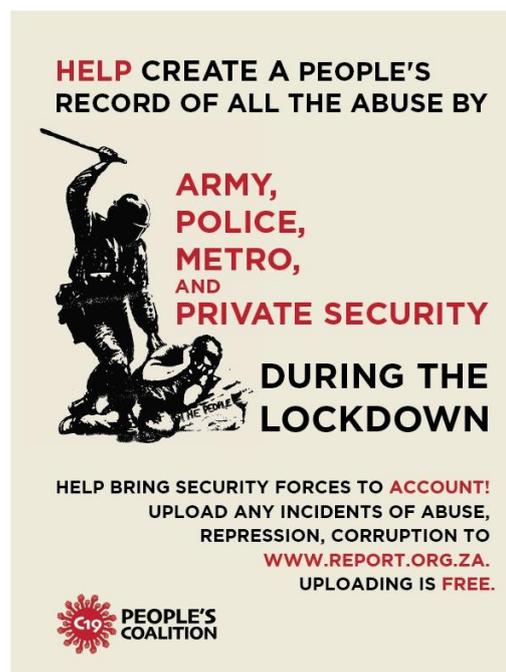
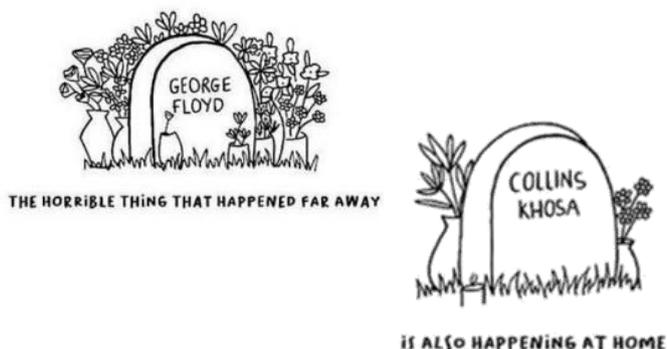


Joining the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance, a network of NGOs which advocates for evidence-based alcohol policies to reduce alcohol-related harms.

Joining the Violence Prevention Forum, a collaboration between government, civil society, researchers, international organisations, development partners and the private sector to build a society free from violence.

Becoming a member of the COVID-19 People’s Coalition (C19-PC). GFSA is part of the C-19 Anti-Repression Working Group (ARWG), which raised concerns about human rights violations perpetrated by the police and other security agencies in enforcing lockdown regulations.

A key task of the ARWG sub-group is to analyse data – including the C19-PC’s online reporting platform [www.report.org.za](http://www.report.org.za) – to facilitate legal action and relief for victims as well as to track longer-term trends and patterns of police abuse and repression.



# Policy ADVOCACY

## Strengthen SA's gun law



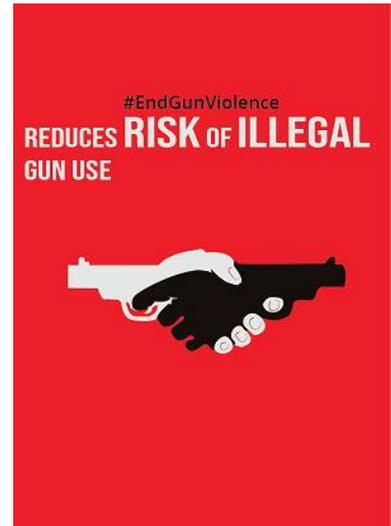
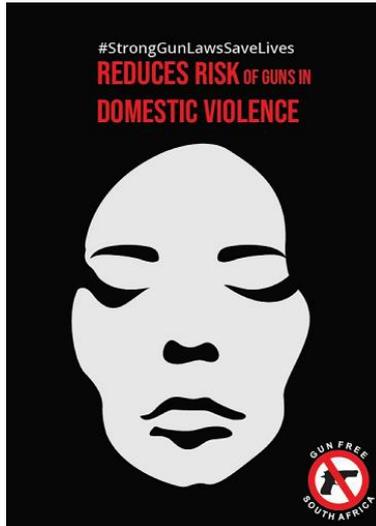
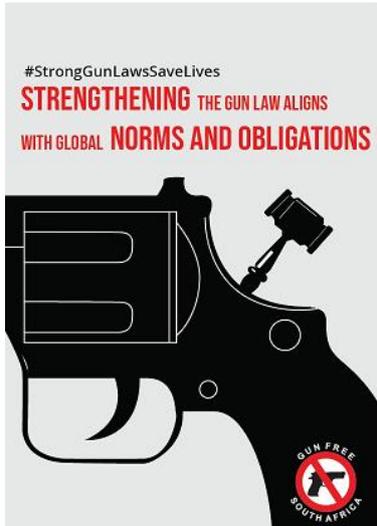
A primary focus of GFSA's work in holding the state to account in enforcing and strengthening SA's firearms control regime was advocacy around the draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill published by the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service on 24 May 2021.

Recognising that the unarmed majority see gun laws as only affecting gun owners and believe they don't have the technical knowledge or expertise to comment, GFSA's primary aim in engaging with the draft Bill was to ensure that those living with the daily reality of gun violence were heard.

To this end we repackaged the technical draft Bill to make it more accessible for people to engage with. In addition to summarising amendments along six key themes, we developed a guide for how to make a submission as well as a template with space for personal comments. We then identified 140 organisations and individuals from various sectors, including gender, health, violence prevention and youth as well as affected communities to approach to make a written submission on the Bill.

### GFSA summarised the draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill along six key themes

<b>1</b> Guiding principles: Amendments align the FCA with developments in the past 20 years	<b>2</b> Limiting who can own what gun for which purpose reduces gun violence
<b>3</b> Reduces risk of gun violence against women	<b>4</b> Reduces risk of illegal gun use
<b>5</b> Reduces risk of guns leaking from legal to illegal pool	<b>6</b> Facilitates enforcement of law



GfSA developed graphics for key themes in the draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill to make it more accessible for people to engage with

We met with, workshopped, phoned, messaged, emailed and posted info on our website and social media platforms to grow awareness and encourage people to make their voices heard by making a submission.



CAMPAIGNS

GfSA partnered with social justice activist organisation [amandla.mobi](http://amandla.mobi), creating a website called Silence the Guns, and using that as a platform to communicate with affected communities.



**Your voice can stop a bullet**

**Support a strong gun law to save lives**

*By the 2 August 2021 submission deadline GfSA had secured 1,250 submissions, 250 through direct contact with approximately 450 organisations and individuals and 1,000 submissions through the amandla.mobi partnership, which engaged several hundred thousand people.*





GFSA ran workshops to help young people make submissions on the draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill

That so many people felt empowered to speak up against gun violence was inspiring. In addition, the GFSA team, especially youth activists, got to put their activism *Hero's Journey* into action. By engaging key stakeholders on the law, the theory of lobbying, advocacy, working with partners, facilitating meetings and drafting submissions was put into practice.

By the time submissions closed, over 118,000 comments were made on the draft Bill. In late November 2021 the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police agreed to delay tabling amendments to the FCA. It tasked the Civilian Secretariat for Police to undertake six months of bilateral stakeholder engagement on proposed changes to ensure that the Bill reflects the views of the South African public, as envisaged in the Constitution. GFSA endorsed this extra time, seeing it as critical to ensuring that all stakeholders are heard, especially youth and communities living with the daily reality of gun violence.

# Advocacy

## SILENCE THE GUNS

"I very much agree with this new gun law and I think once it is approved there will be more lives saved and the gunning down of people will decrease." Noxolo

"I support the new gun reducing law, because guns are no longer protecting but intimidating, the less guns in the world the less the rate of graveyards for our loved ones." Queen

"The ownership of guns does more harm than what it has done to protect individuals. The ownership of a gun has placed more people in danger than what it has done to protect individuals. Self defense doesn't start with a gun, but death surely does." Devron

## Community ACTIVISM and policy ADVOCACY

### Traveling the Hero's Journey

The most significant learning for GFSA has been seeing how a campaign, which has a clear beginning, middle and end, with specific goals, tangible outputs and articulated outcomes, is the best way for young activists to learn how to use the skills developed and tools given. The campaign around the draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill did just that. The publication of the draft Bill was an incredible learning opportunity and enabled the GFSA youth team to



Some of the youth activists who undertook GFSA's year-long *Hero's Journey* activist training in 2021

practice what they had learned on their *Hero's Journey*. Suddenly, the route to achieving the long-term goal of reducing gun violence against young men and women, was clear – get young people to engage with the law. This allowed for rich conversations on what kind of communities we want to live in, how we keep ourselves safe, as well as tough discussions about the power of guns and why they are attractive and appear to be a solution. These interactions enabled the GFSA youth team to strengthen their own knowledge as well as their skill in managing group discussions. They also began to see the connection between local community work and impacting upstream into the policy process and long-term structural change.

Other highlights in implementing and strengthening SA's firearms control regime included:

### Amicus upholding gun control

GFSA was admitted as amicus, represented by Matthew Chaskalson, when the Supreme Court of Appeal heard an appeal by the Minister of Police vs Gun Owners of South Africa regarding the surrender of firearms when owners failed to renew their licences in time. The Court's hard-hitting judgment upheld the Appeal by the Minister of Police, ensuring that gun owners are no longer erroneously protected by the urgent interim order given in July 2018 by North

Gauteng High Court Judge Prinsloo, which enabled them to continue holding onto their guns without complying with the renewals provision of the FCA. This was a significant victory for gun control in SA, and the judgment was critical both regarding the over-reach of Judge Prinsloo in the first instance in allowing the 2018 order, and secondly cast serious aspersion on the veracity of Gun Owners South Africa's case, citing lack of evidence.

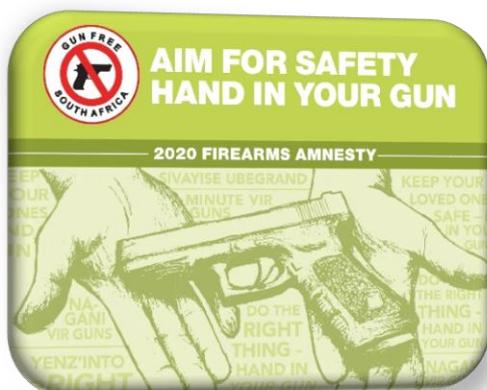


*"The application is dismissed with costs, including the costs of two counsel."*

*Supreme Court of Appeal ruling 23 July 2020 upholding the FCA*

## Firearms amnesty

GFSA supported two six-month national firearms amnesties in 2020-21. For the 1 December 2019 to 31 May 2020 amnesty we produced a pamphlet and infographic to raise awareness and support.

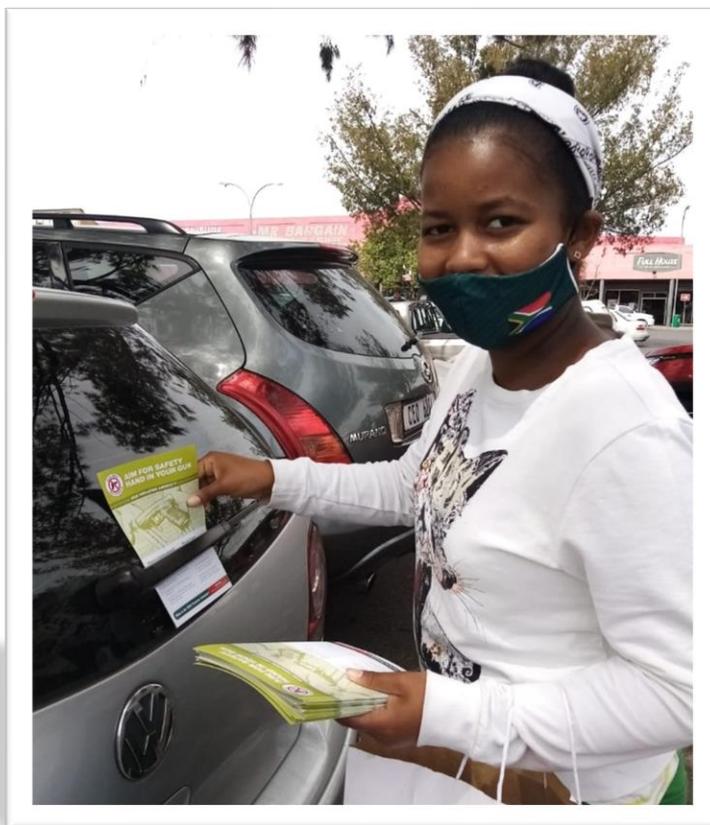


As the number of firearms surrendered during this first amnesty was severely affected by COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, GFSA engaged in the process to declare a further six-month amnesty. We alerted MPs and SAPS officials that the law does not allow an amnesty to be extended and that an amnesty cannot include provisions for gun owners to renew a lapsed gun licence – this was a position argued by the Freedom Front Plus. As with the first amnesty we undertook education and awareness campaigns, distributing the amnesty pamphlet, and issuing a policy briefing.

We also issued a media statement days before the 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2021 amnesty ended to raise concern that so few guns had been surrendered. We criticised the police for not publicising and encouraging support for the amnesty and for ignoring a commitment by the Minister of Police to report monthly on gun hand-ins as a way of building public trust in the police. We also called out thousands of gun owners for failing to comply with the law. With an estimated 450,000+ firearms with expired licences due to non-renewal, the amnesty was an opportunity for gun owners to bring themselves under the law by handing their firearms in to the police, either for destruction or while they applied for a new firearm licence (as an expired licence cannot be renewed). Yet, days before the amnesty was due to end, just 5% of firearms with expired licences had been handed in. We emphasised the SCA's warning in its judgement upholding firearm licence renewals, "there is a real risk that some or many of these firearms, which are now illegally in the possession of their owners, may be stolen or lost and end up in the hands of criminals who may injure or kill others."

While hand-in numbers did increase in the last few days of the amnesty, they were still low.

Consequently, there was a push by the gun lobby to hold a further amnesty, which GFSA did not support. We argued that the conditions for a successful third amnesty were missing. Factors for success include coinciding an amnesty with a change in gun control policy, a coordinated public awareness campaign, and interventions to build public confidence in the police. A third amnesty did not take place.



Distributing pamphlets to raise awareness of the national firearms amnesty

## Policy briefings

GFSA's policy briefings, which are distributed to key legislative and executive arms of government, academics and activists, highlight developments and research on gun violence and prevention.

Seven policy briefings were developed in 2020-21:

- How South Africa can help silence the guns; the research division of the criminal justice sector in parliament included this briefing in their first *Parli Bulletin* distributed across parliament and to all government departments and senior officials.
- Implications of the SCA judgment upholding SA's firearms renewals system
- QUICK FACTS: Guns and violence in South Africa
- The firearms amnesty has ended, does SAPS know where the guns are?
- SA's Central Firearms Register: The collapsing cornerstone of gun control
- The illegal firearms trade in South Africa
- A snapshot of injury-related death in SA in 2017

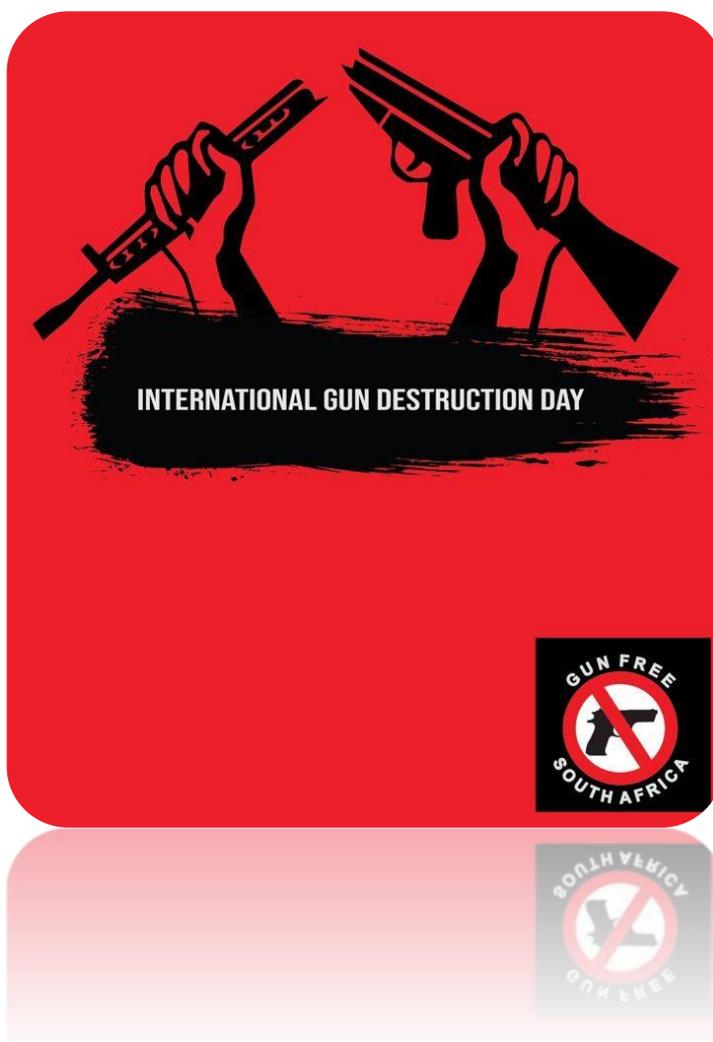
## Policy submissions

GFSA developed various submissions in 2020-21:

We engaged extensively on the *Domestic Violence Amendment Bill* together with several children's rights organisations such as the Children's Institute, Save the Children, and Childsafe.

Our submission on the *Victim Support Services Bill* formally introduced the idea of an additional tax on firearms and ammunition to cover the specific and high costs arising from gun violence.

We also engaged with government following notices of scheduled gun destructions, urging that one of these destructions take place to coincide with 9 July – international gun destruction day – and calling for independent verification that guns in stores are destroyed.



# Governance

## Board

2020-21 saw two changes to GFSA's board: Pamela Crowsley, a deeply committed board member who also acted as Chairperson for some time, stepped down after years of active support; although no longer a Board member, Pam continues to work with GFSA to save lives from gun violence. Palesa Madi, an attorney and deputy director of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at Wits University, joined the board in 2020.

As of 31 December 2021, GFSA's board consisted of seven members:

<b>Yolande Baker</b>	Chairperson	Programme director, Mothers2Mothers
<b>Felicity Harrison</b>	Vice-Chair	Head of sustained dialogues programme, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
<b>Angelica Pino</b>	Treasurer	Grants manager and capacity strengthening specialist, Sexual Violence Research Initiative
<b>Malose Langa</b>	Secretary	Professor, registered psychologist and lecturer at the School of Community and Human Development, University of the Witwatersrand
<b>Palesa Madi</b>	Board Member	Attorney and deputy director of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, University of the Witwatersrand
<b>Sithombo Maqungo</b>	Board Member	Professor and head of the orthopaedic trauma service, Groote Schuur Hospital and University of Cape Town
<b>Richard Matzopoulos</b>	Board Member	Chief specialist scientist and co-director of the South African Medical Research Council's Burden of Disease Research Unit and honorary professor, Public Health Medicine Division, University of Cape Town

## Staffing

Over the 2020-21 period GFSA employed seven staff members, with a financial consultant to manage our finances. The staff are Adèle Kirsten: Director, Sara Chitambo: Communications manager (who resigned in August 2021), Claire Taylor: Researcher, Mary-Ann Nobele: Gauteng regional coordinator, and Monique Hansen: Western Cape regional coordinator; both Mary-Ann and Monique joined GFSA via our partnership with the Children's Radio Foundation. Two youth interns, Sthe (Sithembile) Daza in Gauteng and Temica Bonn in the Western Cape, joined the team in 2021. Sthe was one of the YES interns GFSA had engaged in 2020. Each region also appointed a community facilitator, Dopper Ramapulana in Gauteng and Lee-roy Maans in the Western Cape. In addition, GFSA appointed former 'top-cop' Jeremy Vearey as a strategic advisor in November 2021.



In 2020 GFSA supported the YES campaign, which aims to increase youth employability by employing young people so they can gain work experience. In 2020 GFSA employed three Alexandra-based youth interns

## Appointing Jeremy Vearey as strategic advisor

In November 2021 former Major-General Jeremy Vearey joined GFSA to provide strategic direction and assist in community mobilisation strategies.

Jeremy, who describes himself as a community activist, began his activism in 1983 when he was recruited into uMkhonto weSizwe, the armed wing of the ANC fighting for democracy, for which he was arrested and sent to Robben Island prison in 1988. Upon his release in 1990 after the unbanning of the ANC, Vearey served as Nelson Mandela's bodyguard, worked in

counter-intelligence countering destabilisation through the use of street gangs, and joined the police as a noted anti-gang expert. He was instrumental in uncovering the guns to gangs syndicate involving corrupt senior cop Christiaan Prinsloo who sold thousands of guns earmarked for destruction in police stores to gang leaders.

As the Western Cape's head of detectives, Major-General Vearey was fired in May 2021 after being found guilty of misconduct for "disrespectful" social media posts linking to media reports, allegedly aimed at then National Police Commissioner Khehla Sitole. The dismissal has been described as "an orchestrated, pernicious witch-hunt."

*"Joining GFSA gives me the opportunity to return to my roots of community mobilisation" Jeremy Vearey*



Jeremy Vearey; Photo: Gallo Images/Die Son/Unus Mohamed/Daily Maverick

### Meetings

GFSA held two planning meetings with board members and staff in February 2020 and October 2021. GFSA staff met to plan their activities in each of these years, as well as in late 2021 to plan for 2022.

GFSA held two AGMs in the two years under review, on 15 July 2020 and 22 July 2021.

The GFSA board also had four ordinary meetings during this time.

## Financial report

### Gun Free South Africa Statements of comprehensive income

	<b>2021</b> R's	<b>2020</b> R's
Grants and donations received	2 641 539	2 090 026
Other income	1 094 128	137 704
<b>Total income</b>	<b>3 735 667</b>	<b>2 227 730</b>
Operating expenses	(3 829 297)	(2 179 592)
<b>Operation (deficit)/income</b>	<b>(93 630)</b>	<b>48 138</b>
Investment income	25 566	27 495
Equipment fund	6 078	(12 149)
<b>(Deficit)/income for the year</b>	<b>(61 986)</b>	<b>63 484</b>
<b>Reserves</b>		
At beginning of year	69 490	6 006
<b>At end of year</b>	<b>7 504</b>	<b>69 490</b>

## Donors

Increasing our support remains a priority and successful approaches made in 2020-21 helped secure our longer-term donor base.

Financial support is also sourced from pro bono work and services provided to GFSA. This includes pro bono legal advice provided by Norton Rose Fulbright and our senior legal counsel, Matthew Chaskalson, with Jessica Griffiths and Lwandile Sisilana as junior counsel. Other income sources include private donations and interest yielded.

We appreciate the support of donors who provide funding for activities and operational costs. The support of the following funders enabled us to save lives and reduce gun violence in 2020-21:

- Commonwealth Foundation
- DG Murray Trust
- Heinrich Böll Stiftung
- Millennium Trust
- Open Society Foundation for South Africa
- The RAITH Foundation



## Conclusion

2020-21 were exciting and challenging years. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, the GFSA team did a remarkable job of adapting to a fundamentally and constantly changing context. Through reflection and intention we adapted our way of working to continue to grow the team's knowledge and skills and capacitate and empower community safety activism.

This growth was intensely drawn upon during the draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill submissions process. The experience dominated 2020-21, and it was gratifying to see the youth team learning through practice how to influence and shape policy and to be activists in creating a safer, more just South Africa.



Activists at Women's Day march in Alex

The urgency of our work in mobilising communities and influencing policy to reduce the availability of firearms is underscored as we finalise this Annual Report. In the past few weeks South Africa has been rocked by numerous mass shootings, in which four or more people were shot. These highly publicised massacres have focused attention on a change in the pattern of gun violence in SA, where we see an increasing number of shootings in which multiple people are shot multiple times in public spaces.

Now more than ever we need three interventions.

We must prioritise affected communities by engaging community members living with high levels of gun violence and listening to what they want, rather than being distracted by a small minority of vocal gun owners who oppose any attempts to limit guns and ammunition.

We must stop new guns entering the market by tabling the Firearms Control Amendment Bill in parliament. Provisions in the draft Bill published in 2021 will help stop the circulation of guns in our society by limiting who can own guns and ammunition, the types of guns and ammunition that can be owned and the reasons for gun and ammunition ownership.

We must reduce the pool of guns in South Africa. GFSA has called on government to establish a specialised firearms unit that is effectively resourced to mop up guns flooding into our society and control legal stocks. This entails recovering and destroying legal and illegal guns and ammunition, enhancing oversight over the entire firearms control management system to combat fraud and corruption, and ensuring that SA has a functional Central Firearms Registry.

Now more than ever we need to take real action to silence the guns.





# Gun Free South Africa

Making South Africa safer