

gun free zone



**Making
your school
a firearm
free zone**

iGUN
 iFLOP



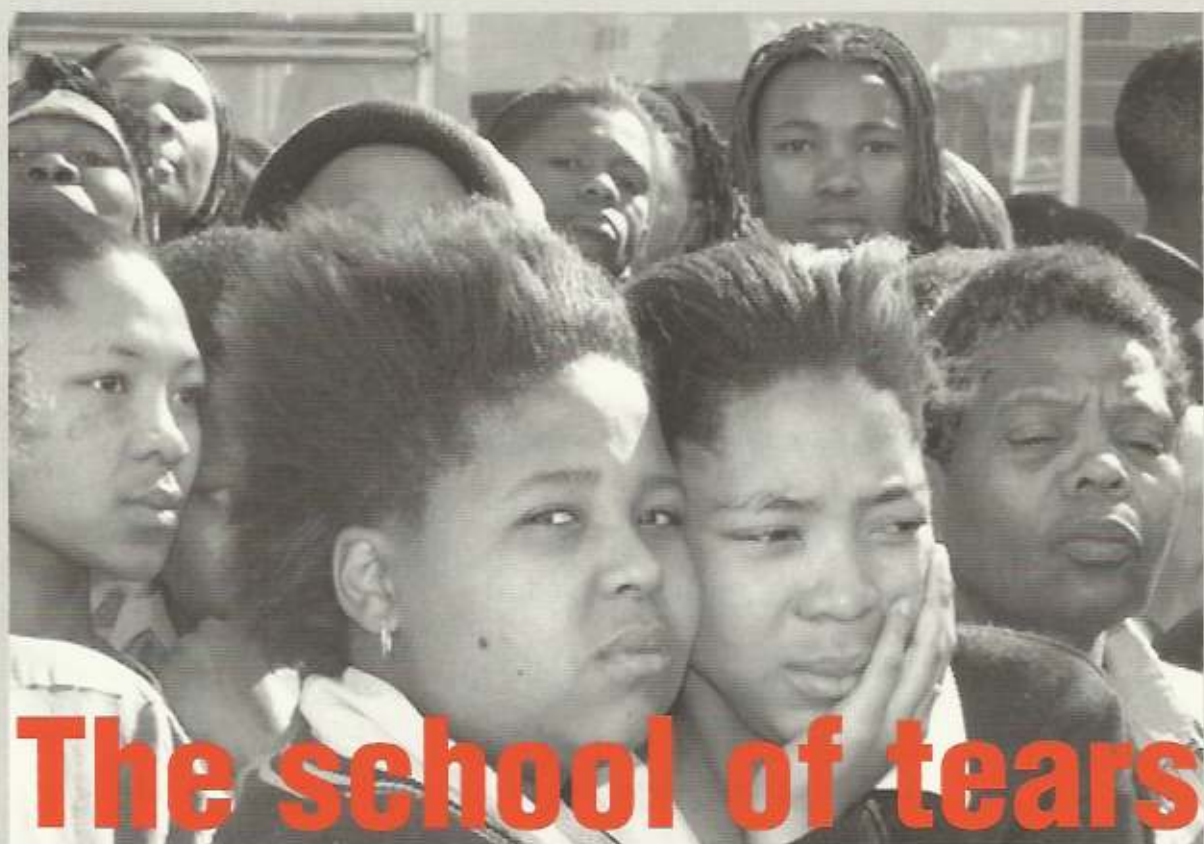
**GUN FREE
SOUTH AFRICA**

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Contents

Could this be your school?	2
An epidemic of violence	4
Schools without guns	9
Understanding firearm free zones	11
The firearm free zone law	14
Safe schools	16
Step by step to a firearm free zone	18
Getting police support	21
Common questions people ask	23
Monitoring and evaluating the firearm free zone	26
Sustaining the firearm free zone	31
Taking the idea of firearm free zones further	33
Organisations that can help you	41

Could this be your school?



The school of tears

Crazed teacher runs amok, mows down 3

A crazed teacher ran amok in a Soweto school yesterday, shooting dead three of his colleagues in cold blood.

Police recovered 14 spent cartridges, a pistol and one unused bullet next to the bodies.

Enraged pupils at the Anchor Comprehensive School in Mzimhlophe wanted to

avenge the killings, but were prevented from doing so by police.

When the *Sowetan* team arrived at the school, weeping teachers, pupils and relatives of the dead teachers were milling around the school. There was a tense stand-off between pupils armed with spades and iron rods and the police. The pupils wanted to force their way into the office

where the teacher was hiding.

Soweto police spokesman Captain Richard Luvhengo confirmed the incident. He said that the teacher, whose name is being withheld, entered the staff room at 8.30 am and found two female teachers chatting.

"Without uttering a word, he turned and walked out. But on his way out, he met a

colleague, Henry Lebea, and shot him several times."

Luvhengo said after Lebea was shot the man saw two other colleagues, Stella Legae and Mamokete Lethiba-Nyame, and gunned them down too. The three teachers died instantly.

Police arrested the man after he was found hiding in one of the offices.

Increasing gun violence

The Anchor Comprehensive School is not the only school where gun violence has taken place in recent years. Schools are increasingly exposed to gun violence in which youth are the victims, the perpetrators or both, for instance:

- ❖ A 15-year-old Mowbray learner was accidentally shot when a fellow learner was playing with a gun in the school courtyard.
- ❖ At Mokgome Secondary School in Meadowlands, Soweto, a matric learner, who was jilted by his girlfriend, shot a fellow learner in the heart before turning the gun on himself.

Teachers are also at risk in school-related violence:

- ❖ Nandi Mhlongo, an educator at Olifantsvlei Primary School in Eikenhof, was shot dead inside her classroom in full view of her Grade 1 class.
- ❖ A Krugersdorp educator, Andreas Werth, was executed by a pupil in full view of his learners.



An epidemic of violence

Violence is a growing epidemic in South Africa. Almost every day we see on TV or read in the newspapers stories about people being attacked, robbed, raped or killed. Guns are used in many of these attacks. And many of the attacks involve young people.

Between 1994 and 1998, South Africa had 57 106 murders and 111 000 attempted murders involving the use of guns.¹

Between 1996 and 1998, guns were used in 180 088 robberies. In 1998, 85% of all serious robberies involved the use of guns. In taxi violence, guns outnumber other weapons by 17 to 1.¹

In South Africa, more people die of gunshot wounds than in car accidents.²

How does violence affect us?

The threat that guns pose to personal safety and human dignity creates fear, especially among the powerless and the weakest in society. This means that women, children, youth and the elderly are particularly affected.

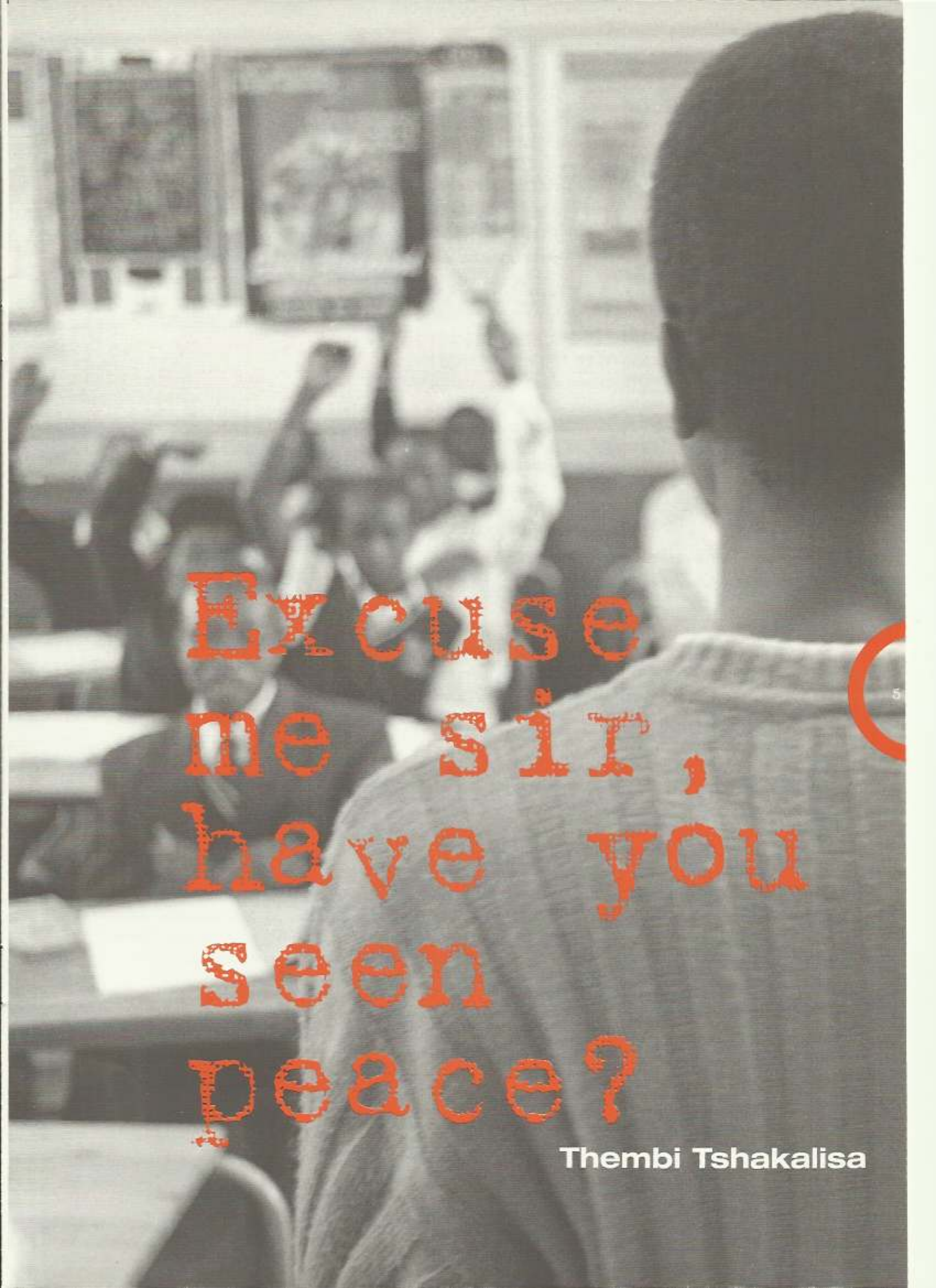
Fear undermines people's ability to function normally in the family, at school and at work. We may not be consciously aware of the fear - but somewhere at the back of our minds many of us sense it. We fear for our own safety. But we also fear for the safety of those we love - our children, parents and friends.

Violence also makes all of us more anxious. This means we can't live life to the full, improve the quality of our lives, or create a prosperous and just society.

Is this the kind of society we want to create - a society driven by fear?

¹ Chetty, R. 'Firearm crime in South Africa.' In R. Chetty (ed.) (2000). *Firearm Use and Distribution in South Africa*. Pretoria: National Crime Prevention Centre.

² National Injury Mortality Surveillance Study (2000). Annual Report. UNISA Institute for Social and Health Sciences, Medical Research Council and CSIR.



Excuse
me sir,
have you
seen
peace?

Thembi Tshakalisa

Children and youth

Children and youth are especially likely to suffer injury from guns. And the problem is getting steadily worse. A Cape Town study showed that the number of injuries from guns amongst youth under 19 years doubled between 1992 and 1996. For the same age group, the number of deaths from gunshots increased from 32% to 87% over this period.

In 1998, 461 children under 12 years of age and 358 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 were killed with guns.¹

Male youth in South Africa are especially prone to carry and use guns. Why is this? It seems that young men growing up are faced with the issue of proving their manhood and masculinity. For many young men, this comes through belonging to a gang and having a gun.

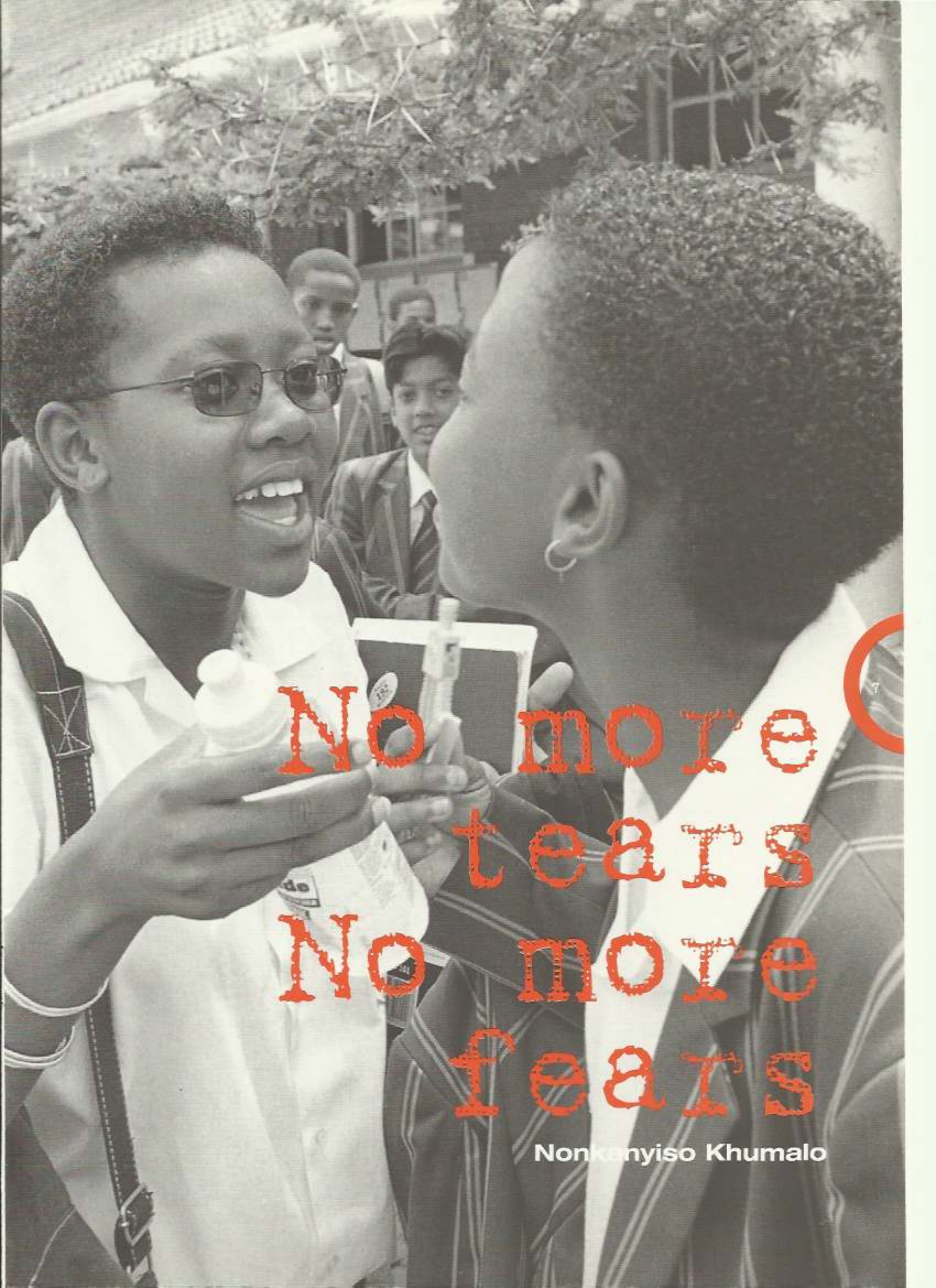
Many youth see no alternative to using gangs and guns to build their self-esteem and give them self-respect

Youth then end up using guns:

- ❖ to forcibly get what they want from others - including stealing property, and rape
- ❖ to settle arguments and disagreements
- ❖ to prove their status among their friends or peers
- ❖ and where all hope is gone, to commit suicide.

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation says that youth carrying guns creates high risks for everyone. Where guns are present, arguments are much more likely to lead to shooting, injury and even death.

¹ Chetty, K. 'Firearm crime in South Africa.' In R. Chetty (ed.) (2000). *Firearm Use and Distribution in South Africa*. Pretoria: National Crime Prevention Centre.



No more
tears
No more
tears

Nonkanyiso Khumalo

Guns and schools

It is not only youth that are carrying guns and other dangerous weapons, such as knives, into schools. Educators also carry guns to defend themselves against learners!

Siphiwe Masuku, the co-ordinator of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's Safe Schools Project, says that in the past most educators would feel unsafe because of strangers or outsiders in their schools. **"But today they sometimes feel unsafe from the very students they are teaching. When I asked a number of students why they carry weapons in schools, they said that they want to defend themselves from the teachers, and the teachers likewise."**

The end result is schools in which both educators and learners carry guns and other dangerous weapons. Everybody feels fearful, and the ability of educators to educate, and learners to learn, is undermined.

What can be done?

It is clear that there are choices available to us. We can continue to allow guns into schools, and allow youth and teachers to carry guns. Then there will always be the risk of injury and killings, along with the fear and worry about safety.

Or we can take a stand against guns.

Schools without guns

In the last section we looked at the effect guns are having on our society, especially our schools and our youth. In the past few years some schools bravely took the decision not to allow guns at school. Two of their stories are told below.

Thabiso Mollo comes from Diepkloof in Soweto. In 1994 he was a student at Namedi Secondary School:

"At this time there were a lot of people bringing guns into the school. At first people got the guns to fight the apartheid government but then after some time they used them for criminal activities. Students carried guns openly to school at this time and so did teachers because they were scared of the students. Some of the students used drugs at school, like cocaine, and when drunk with the drugs they did bad things so the teachers felt they needed to protect themselves.

In 1994, I was the chairperson of the SRC and I decided to do something about it. I got a pamphlet from someone about how to make your school a gun free zone. I phoned and I went with some other students to a workshop. After the workshop we formed a steering committee and began to talk to everyone in the community. We talked to schools, churches, the South African police. We said to them some places in our community, like schools and churches, must be gun free zones. At first people did not understand what a gun free zone was - some thought we were going to give them free guns! We just kept on talking and explaining.



We went to all the schools. We spoke to students in assembly and to the teachers through SADTU. Most of the schools are now gun free zones and the community centre and the library is too.

One reason we were successful is that we got lots of help from the South African Police Service's school monitoring unit. People do not carry guns openly to school anymore. We still have a big problem with drugs in our schools here though, but at least guns are not in the schools. Now we are talking to the taverns and shebeens to see if they will become gun free zones because this is where a lot of shootings take place in our area."

One of the schools in Diepkloof that has become a gun free zone is Ikaneng Primary School. Brenda Memela is an educator at the school. She tells us about why the school chose to declare itself a gun free zone:

"Diepkloof is a very violent community. Shootings are a daily happening in our community, many of the children in our school have been orphaned because of gun violence. You are not free to move around here because you are afraid of the gun men, they are so powerful they even rob your property like your car, there is a lot of car hijacking. I do not think that making our school a gun free zone can really change that but what it can do is help the children in this school grow up with the knowledge that carrying a gun is not the solution.

We are preparing children not only for now but for the future. They are learning from us that guns do not solve problems, they make more! We also think that the community around the school property gets the message and the children tell their parents.

We knew that few children would bring real guns to school but we used the idea of a gun-free zone to educate the children. We told them that even toy guns make us think that guns are good and can solve things. We also talked about how pellet guns can harm children.

When we declared the school a gun free zone, to bring the message home we asked the children to bring all their toy guns and we put them in a big pile and smashed them. This helped the children to learn that guns are not good."

Under- standing firearm free zones

The schools we have just heard about took the decision to ban guns on their own. But now there is a new law in place to help schools get rid of firearms.

In April 2001 President Mbeki signed the Firearms Control Act, 2000 (Act No. 60 of 2000) into law. This new law makes provision for firearm free zones (FFZs).

According to the law, an FFZ is any place that has been declared by the Minister for Safety and Security to be an FFZ. It can be a school, hospital, workplace or any other area. Nobody is allowed to bring guns or ammunition into an FFZ, or to store guns or ammunition there. If any person does so, they can be charged in court with having committed a crime, and they can be given a heavy prison sentence.

Making a school into an FFZ is just one step - but a very important one - in making our schools safe places for learning again.

How firearm free zones can help

Making your school an FFZ can bring a whole range of benefits:

- ❖ the first benefit is to reduce the chances of injury or death from guns. Both learners and educators stand less chance of getting seriously hurt

- ❖ the learning environment becomes a safer place for learners - a place where they can be more secure from harm, not at greater risk
- ❖ no guns means that both fear and anxiety can be reduced
- ❖ educators can feel safer when guns are not around - they can carry out their jobs with less fear
- ❖ the influence of gangs on the school is reduced, without guns, they can't pose as big a threat
- ❖ the learning environment will improve, and both learners and educators can get on with the real purpose of schools: helping learners learn and educators educate
- ❖ learners and educators will begin to talk about alternatives to violence and perhaps also find ways of solving problems without violence
- ❖ in the absence of fear, there is more chance that learners can learn more effectively
- ❖ the school can start to build trust among all its role-players - learners, parents, educators and the community.

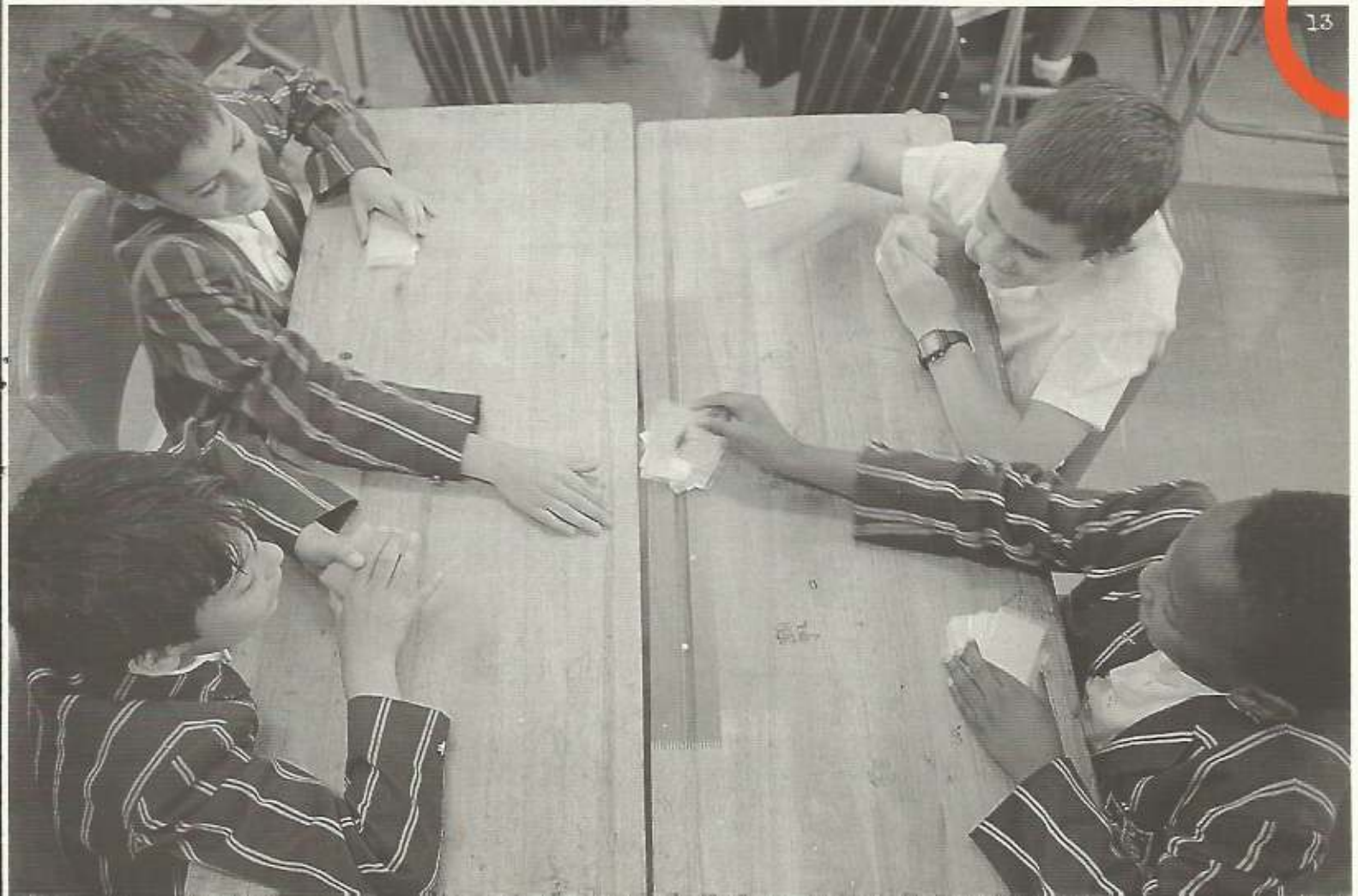
Even though a school may have been declared an FFZ this will not reduce gun violence in the broader community. If there is violence in the community around the school this will continue. But making the school free of guns can influence the community positively. It can get people in the community thinking about what they can do to get rid of guns, and maybe they will begin to think of ways to reduce violence in the area.

Fighting, killing a thing of the past
Justice, friendship for now.

Enver Adams

Getting rid of guns does not mean all problems in the school are solved. In fact, it may mean some new challenges! For example, before, learners may have used guns or other weapons to solve problems. Now that guns are no longer allowed, what can they do?

The challenge is for learners and educators to find new and better ways of solving conflict. The resource list on page 41 lists some organisations that could help you do this.



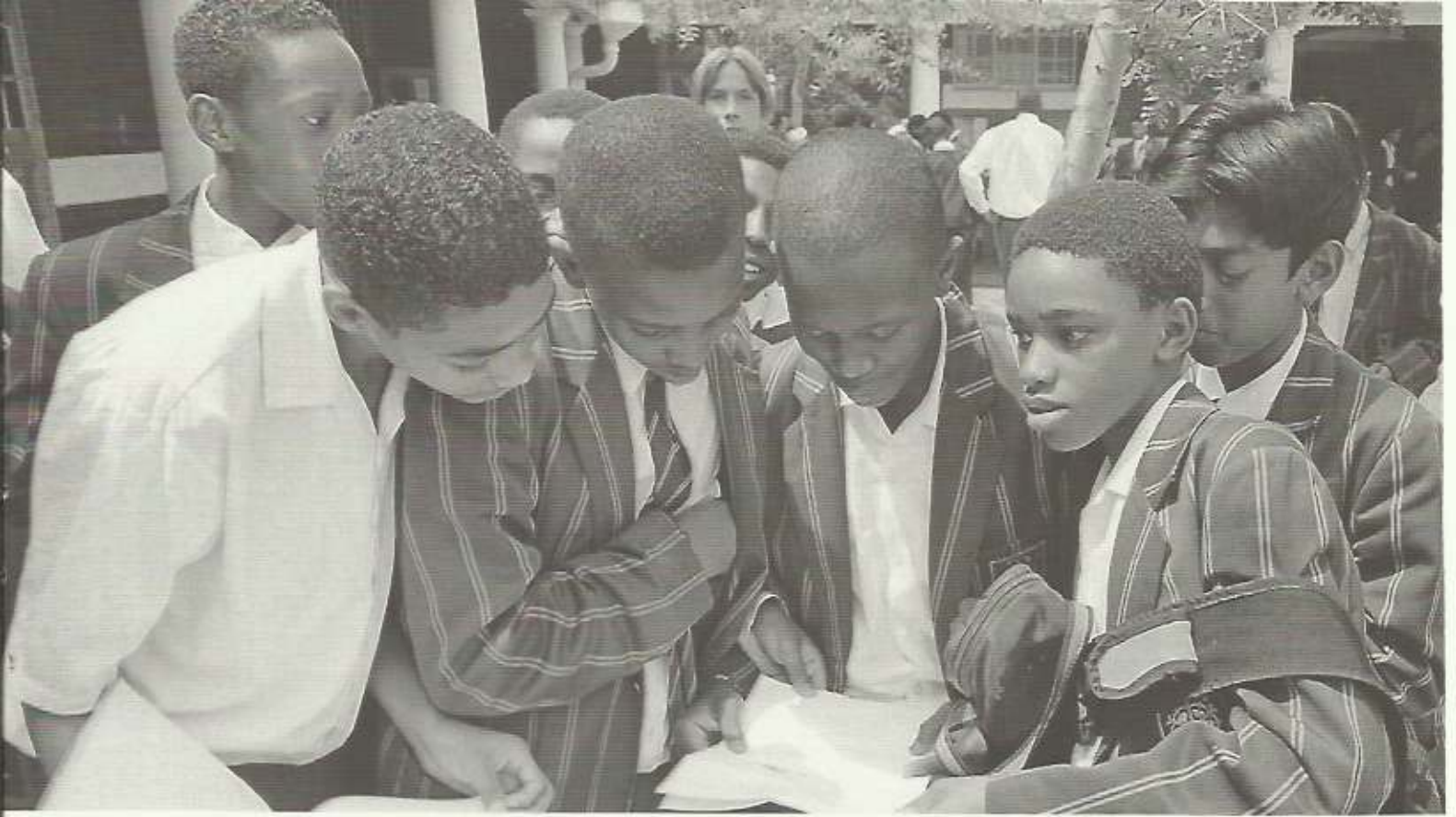
The firearm free zone law

Section 140 of the Firearms Control Act, 2000 (Act No. 60 of 2000) allows the Minister for Safety and Security to declare certain premises, or parts of premises, firearm free zones (FFZs). For example, he can declare a school, or all schools in a certain area, firearm free. He could do the same for a hospital, clinic or taxi rank.

The Minister must consult with the National Commissioner of Police and the Secretary for Safety and Security before he declares an FFZ. He must also publish a notice in the Government Gazette to inform everyone.

Once the Minister has declared a place to be an FFZ, it becomes a criminal offence:

- ❖ to allow any firearm or ammunition into the FFZ
- ❖ to carry any firearm or ammunition in the FFZ
- ❖ to store any firearm or ammunition in the FFZ.



The penalties for disobeying this law are very harsh:

- ❖ if a person in charge of an FFZ allows any gun or ammunition to be there, he or she can be sent to prison for up to 5 years
- ❖ if a person brings a gun or ammunition into an FFZ, they can be sent to prison for up to 10 years
- ❖ if a person stores guns or ammunition there, he or she can be sent to prison for up to 25 years.

If your premises are declared an FFZ, you must put up notices at every entrance to your premises. The notices must say:

"In terms of the Firearms Control Act, 2000 these premises have been declared a firearm free zone. It is a criminal offence to allow, bring or store any gun or ammunition into this area."

The notice must be in English and one of the other official languages which is spoken in the area. You can put up notices in other languages if you wish.

Safe Schools

By making your school an FFZ you are trying to make your school a safer place. The Department of Education has a range of other strategies to make schools safer places, where learners can learn and educators can educate without disruption. The FFZ policy should be seen as part of these other policies.

Tirisano: call to action

In July 1999 the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, announced a new plan for education called Tirisano. The plan said that lack of school safety was keeping learners from learning properly. Schools needed to be reclaimed from violence as "spaces of peace and stability".

The Tirisano plan mentions three important ways to make schools safer places:

- ❖ help youth to stay away from violence
- ❖ make sure there are fewer possible places where violence can take place
- ❖ find other ways of solving problems.

How can schools do this? Here are some ideas that come out of the Tirisano plan:

- ❖ Each school should be well managed and run properly, so there is more stability. Stable schools provide an environment where educators feel more motivated and learners do better.
- ❖ Educators and learners should talk together and co-operate in solving problems. Talking is a better way of dealing with problems than fighting when you are angry.
- ❖ Learners should know the school rules and should be rewarded for doing well. Rewards usually encourage learners to try even harder.

Dangerous objects and drugs

At the time of writing this booklet the Education Minister was planning to put out a public notice to say that no one is allowed to bring dangerous objects or drugs into public schools. This would mean that no person could bring illegal drugs (like dagga or ecstasy) into a school. They would also be forbidden to bring a dangerous object (like a gun, knife or knobkerrie) into a school.

The school principal or a police official would be entitled to search anyone who wanted to enter school premises for drugs or dangerous objects. There would have to be a sign at the entrance to a school to say that anyone entering can be searched.

More contact with the police

In South Africa, the South African Police Service (SAPS) has the main responsibility for making us all feel safe from crime. So it makes sense that schools should have good relationships with the local police. The Education Minister has said that schools should try to develop better relations with the SAPS, especially through community policing forums. It is also a good idea to have police officials present at sporting and cultural events at schools, which many people attend, to help keep the peace.

By making your school an FFZ you will also be creating a closer link between the school and the SAPS.

We live in fear
... the pain
All becomes too hard to bear
Langaletu Zama

Step by step to a firearm free zone

Step 1: Talk

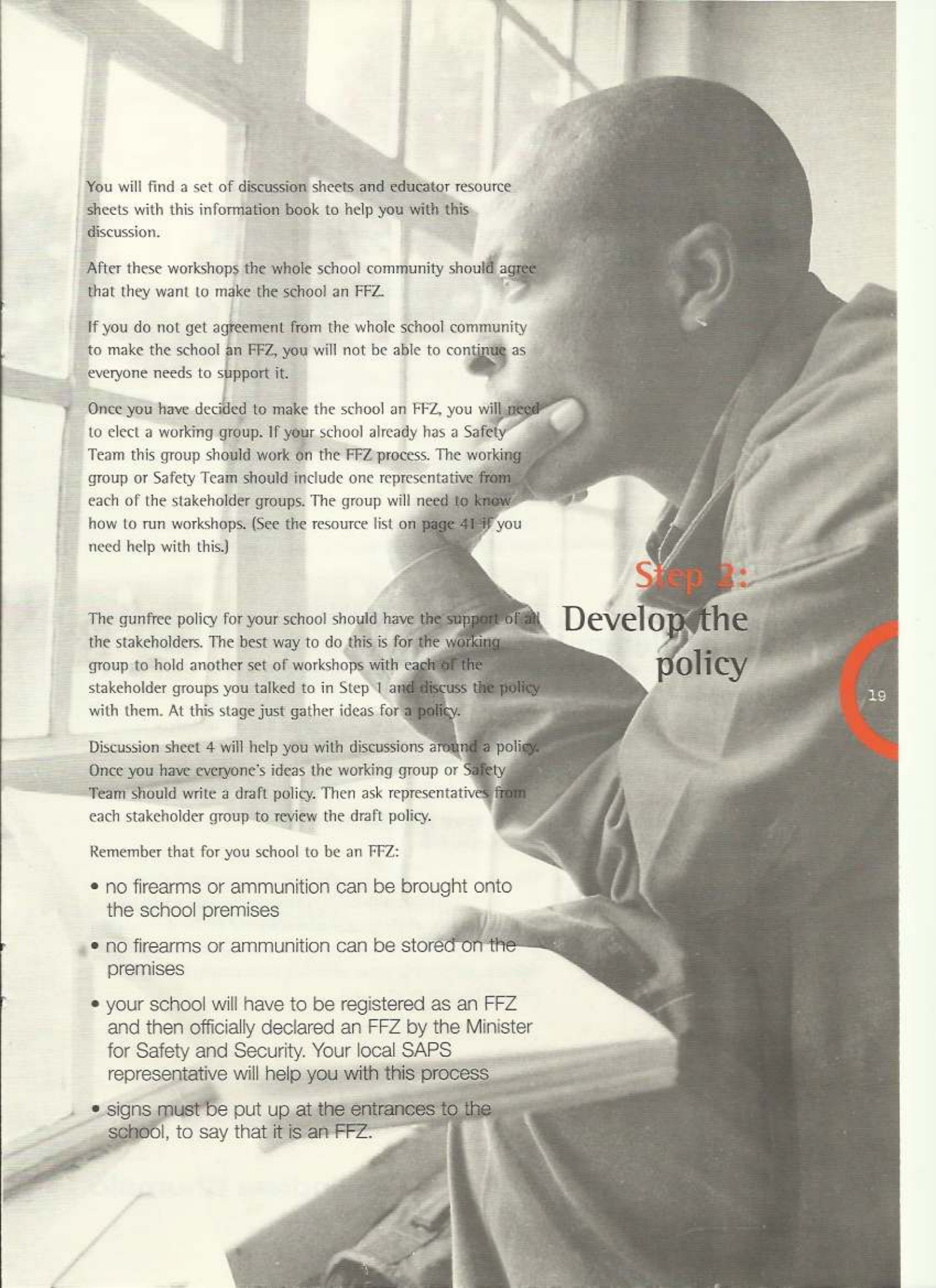
Introduce the idea. Talk to educators, parents, the learner representative council, and any other groups who use the school after hours. (These are called the stakeholders.) Explain what a firearm free zone (FFZ) means. Get everybody involved. Make sure you have the school management, SGB (School Governing Body) and LRC (Learners Representative Council) on your side.

Don't forget to also get the local police involved right from the beginning, (see page 21).

Hold initial workshops with interested people from each of the stakeholder groups. You may need to hold a small workshop with representatives first, and then with their help go on to run broader workshops with everyone in the school community.

In the workshops, you need to think about:

- ❖ What exactly is the problem of gun violence in our school?
- ❖ What is your vision for a firearm free school?
- ❖ What is an FFZ and do you want to make your school an FFZ?



You will find a set of discussion sheets and educator resource sheets with this information book to help you with this discussion.

After these workshops the whole school community should agree that they want to make the school an FFZ.

If you do not get agreement from the whole school community to make the school an FFZ, you will not be able to continue as everyone needs to support it.

Once you have decided to make the school an FFZ, you will need to elect a working group. If your school already has a Safety Team this group should work on the FFZ process. The working group or Safety Team should include one representative from each of the stakeholder groups. The group will need to know how to run workshops. (See the resource list on page 41 if you need help with this.)

The gunfree policy for your school should have the support of all the stakeholders. The best way to do this is for the working group to hold another set of workshops with each of the stakeholder groups you talked to in Step 1 and discuss the policy with them. At this stage just gather ideas for a policy.

Discussion sheet 4 will help you with discussions around a policy. Once you have everyone's ideas the working group or Safety Team should write a draft policy. Then ask representatives from each stakeholder group to review the draft policy.

Remember that for your school to be an FFZ:

- no firearms or ammunition can be brought onto the school premises
- no firearms or ammunition can be stored on the premises
- your school will have to be registered as an FFZ and then officially declared an FFZ by the Minister for Safety and Security. Your local SAPS representative will help you with this process
- signs must be put up at the entrances to the school, to say that it is an FFZ.

Step 2: Develop the policy

Step 3:

Adopt the policy

Now you are ready to adopt a policy to rid your school of guns. Invite all the stakeholders to a big meeting. Here you can ask everyone to support the new firearm free policy.

At this point if you do not have a Safety Team you need to elect one. They will be responsible for implementing the FFZ policy and other safe school policies in the school.

Your next step is to register your school as an FFZ with the Department for Safety and Security. The Minister for Safety and Security will have to give his approval before the policy can be finalised.

On the day that your school is officially declared an FFZ, you may want to have a public launch. Tell the community about what it means to be a firearm free school. Invite all the stakeholders and members of the community to celebrate the big step you are taking. Be proud of your contribution to safety!

Step 4:

Implement

The Safety Team should now implement the policy, so that the school becomes and remains an FFZ. This includes explaining the policy and rules to learners, educators and parents, and starting to control access to the school.

You will find a booklet describing the role of the Safety Team in implementing an FFZ with this book.

Step 5:

Maintain your school as an FFZ

Now that your school has become an FFZ, the main task is to maintain the FFZ.

This may involve educating newcomers to the school about the FFZ, making contact with other schools in the area which have also chosen to exclude guns, and monitoring the implementation of the policy. You may also decide to learn about alternatives to violence, and to help those who have been traumatised by violence (see pages 33 to 40).

If gun bullets were flower seeds
I could spread them all over the world
To bring peace, happiness and hope
For the whole world.

Silindiwe Khumalo

Getting police support

The South African Police Service (SAPS) is there to help you set up your firearm free zone (FFZ). Its role is to give you the support you need to make the FFZ really work.

Your first step should be to make contact with the local police station as soon as you start talking about making your school an FFZ. The police need to be a stakeholder in your project from the very beginning.

You may want to invite a police representative to attend meetings of your working group. You should also make contact with the Community Policing Forum in your area, if such a forum exists. If a police officer cannot attend all the meetings of the working group, make sure that the police are kept up to date with how your plans are developing.

Encourage the police to attend all the big workshops and launch events. The local police need to know about your draft policy. They may be able to say whether it is practical from a security point of view, and whether you have left out any important issues.

The police role

The police role once the FFZ is set up is very clear. It is:

- ❖ to provide back-up support if anyone breaks the law by bringing guns or ammunition onto the premises of an FFZ. The police should be called in and they should arrest the person concerned
- ❖ to make random spot checks for guns and ammunition. This is so that people coming into an FFZ take seriously the fact that they cannot bring these things into the area

- ❖ to support and train the Safety Team, especially when new members join
- ❖ joint planning with the Safety Team to maintain the FFZ.

The law for FFZs gives the police extra powers to search. They have the power to search any building or area that has been declared an FFZ, at any time, for guns or ammunition. Normally police need a search warrant to do this, but in the case of an FFZ they can do this without a warrant. They can also search any person in an FFZ, and take away any gun or ammunition found in an FFZ or on a person in the FFZ.

The police station in your area should draw up an action plan. The plan must say how the police will deal with any requests you make to them for help when you suspect firearms have been brought onto the premises.

Enforcing the firearm free zone

Once the FFZ has been set up, you will need to keep in close contact with the local police. Perhaps you can decide that someone on your Safety Team is to be the liaison person with the police. This person will then contact the police from time to time to provide them with the latest update on the FFZ.

The police have a right to make random searches of the FFZ. They will not give advance warning of this. They will merely arrive at the school and ask to conduct searches of the property or of anybody on the property. They must be allowed to do this. Remember that the law says that the police are allowed to search FFZs at any time without a search warrant.

If you suspect that guns or ammunition are in the FFZ, or that someone is carrying them into the FFZ, you must notify the police immediately. The police will help out as quickly as possible. They will come to the school and search the suspected person or place. If the police find anyone with guns or ammunition in the FFZ, they will arrest that person and charge them. They will try to act cautiously in doing this, so that people don't get hurt.

Finally, the police will keep proper records of any breaking of the law. They will record all such incidents in an Incidence Book.

Common questions people ask

How do we enforce firearm free zones?

The law tells us what an FFZ is. It is based on agreement between all the stakeholders. In your school FFZ policy you will have spelt out the steps to follow if someone brings a firearm onto the school premises.

Won't gangs or criminals be encouraged to enter our school if they know that there are no guns?

Gangs are already attacking schools, even though there are guns in some schools. But there is a much higher risk of shooting, and of people getting hurt or killed if both the criminals and the schools have guns.

If firearm free schools are attacked by criminals with guns, the chance of anyone getting hurt or killed is much smaller.

What happens if someone brings a gun onto the school premises?

Before setting up an FFZ, the Safety Team makes sure that it involves the local police. A close relationship with the police is important to make the FFZ work. Your school FFZ policy will describe the steps to follow if a firearm is brought onto the school premises. Your policy would probably say that nobody has to confront a person suspected of carrying a gun or ammunition into an FFZ.

Instead, the police are called in. It is their responsibility to search and arrest the person.

If educators don't carry guns, how will they protect themselves?

As many educators have already discovered, guns don't guarantee safety. In fact, a gun may easily be stolen from an educator and used against him or her.

A school that is an FFZ is actually less likely to have violent conflict involving guns. This means that there is less chance of a person getting hurt or killed.

There are also other ways in which educators can deal with conflict in the classroom. See the Resource list on page 41 for organisations that can help with ideas.

Does this also mean that we can't carry guns on our way to school? Doesn't that endanger us while we are going to school?

You are not prevented from carrying a gun on your journey to school. But you can't bring it onto the school premises. This in effect means that educators and learners will not be able to carry guns, as there will be nowhere to store them on the school premises. (Don't forget that the new law makes it an offence to store guns on the school premises.)

Research has shown that if attacked, people who carry guns are more likely to have the guns used against them and more likely to get shot or seriously hurt. You may get attacked, whether or not you carry a gun. But your chances of getting seriously hurt are much higher if you carry a gun.



With only peace
would this
world survive.

Siyabonga Giyo



Monitoring and evaluating the FFZ

Once the firearm free policy is in place, don't forget to check to see how it is working. You will need the Safety Team to meet regularly (perhaps once a week to start with, and later maybe only once a month). The team will get together to talk about how things are going, and to discuss any problems.

Monitoring

The Safety Team will also need to keep records of any incidents that occur. An incident report like the one below could be used for this.

Incident report

Year: _____
 School name: _____
 Principal (signature): _____

Date of incident	Type of incident	Where the incident took place	Description of incident	Follow-up action
	For example: shooting, carrying of weapon, assault with gun, murder, armed robbery, possession of weapon	For example: Grade x classroom, toilet, main entrance	For example: time, who was involved, what happened, who witnessed it, etc.	For example: SAPS was called; arrest; ambulance; trauma debriefing arranged; measures school will take to prevent reoccurrence

COMMENTS:



The second type of report that is useful to keep is the activity report, which records any activity around the maintenance of an FFZ.

Activity report				
Year: _____				
School name: _____				
Principal (signature): _____				
Date of activity	Description of activity	Partners	Impact of activity	Follow-up action
	For example: SAPS spot check, drama by Grade x at assembly, poster competition, community display	For example: local police station members, Mayor, church groups, Red Cross, etc.	For example: 1 firearm found on learner; material used by educator in classroom; school awareness; communication to parents, etc.	For example: learner arrested by SAPS and will appear in court on (date); second spot check required this term; improve fencing, etc.
COMMENTS:				

You may, over time, want to think about whether changes need to be made to the school's FFZ policy to make it work better. Remember to always involve all stakeholders in agreeing to any changes you need to make. The same process that you followed in setting up the FFZ will need to be used in making any changes.

You may want to issue a newsletter or bulletin to keep stakeholders informed of how the FFZ is working.

Don't forget to keep a good relationship with the police. They are there to back you up if anybody does bring guns or ammunition into the FFZ.

Evaluating the policy

You will need to evaluate how well the FFZ is working six months or a year after the FFZ was declared. This will help you find out if there is a reduction of firearms at your school, what has changed because of being an FFZ, and any challenges your school faces that impact on the FFZ. Perhaps there have been unexpected results such as other schools following your example. Some ideas for how you can evaluate the FFZ policy are listed below.

Review the incident and activity reports to gather information on:

- ❖ Where, when and how incidents occurred in the school. Is there a pattern or trend?
- ❖ Who is involved? Is it the same group of people? If so, what can we do to deal with the causes of such behaviour?
- ❖ Is the school following up on incidents and following the policy?
- ❖ What response has there been to particular activities? What else can we do?
- ❖ How can our relationship with the police and other stakeholders be improved?
- ❖ What else do we need to put in place to support the FFZ?

Hold a school meeting to which all stakeholders are invited, and ask them:

- ❖ How has the level of firearm incidents and violence in the school changed? Has it improved? Has it decreased or increased?
- ❖ What additional things need to be put in place to maintain the FFZ?

- ❖ What impact is the project having? (For example, the successes that have been achieved, whether there has been an increase in awareness of firearm violence, the reaction or feedback there has been from parents, taxi drivers, etc.)
- ❖ How can the FFZ be supported further by stakeholders, such as the local councillor?

Hold separate meetings with each of the stakeholder groups and ask them to comment on questions such as:

- ❖ Has the number of firearm incidents been reduced at the school? What type of incidents are occurring?
- ❖ What makes the FFZ work in our school? (For example, enforcing the policy (how?), building trust between learners, support from the community, or improved access control.)
- ❖ What problems do we face in maintaining our school as an FFZ? How can we overcome these problems?
- ❖ What else do we need to put in place to maintain an FFZ (For example, improved access control or greater participation from individuals.)
- ❖ Has the carrying of firearms been replaced with higher incidents of other violence (related to bullying or carrying knives, for example) and, if so, what can we do about this?

Draw up a short questionnaire for parents, learners, educators and stakeholders. Hand these out and ask people to fill them in. The questionnaires can be returned anonymously by posting them in a special box provided for the purpose. The survey questions could cover the following aspects:

- ❖ The number of firearms that have been seen at the school in the given timeframe, where the firearms were, how they got onto the property.
- ❖ Whether or not they think that the FFZ has improved levels of safety, teaching and learning at the school, and if not, why not?
- ❖ How they feel about the FFZ, firearms and other weapons.
- ❖ Ask an open question to invite feedback, comments, anonymous reporting or ideas they may have to improve safety at the school.
- ❖ Ask an outside organisation (such as one of those listed in the resource list on page 41) to help with the evaluation.

Sustaining the FFZ

Support from the police

The ongoing support of the police is vital to make your firearm free zone (FFZ) work. Keep in regular contact with your local police. Make sure that the police are making regular spot checks at the school. If the police officials in your area change, make sure that you build a relationship with the new officials.

Informing newcomers

Remember that newcomers to your school will not know about the process you went through to develop your FFZ. So, at least once a year make a special effort to tell newcomers to the school - new learners and new parents - what an FFZ means. Tell them why it is important and how it has helped your school. Explain how they can get involved.

Each year, you will need to elect a new safety team. From time to time, you may also need to train a new group of people to help with maintaining the FFZ.

Buddy schools or school clusters

It can be a big help to make contact with other schools - in your area or in other areas - which have also decided to become FFZs. You can develop a 'buddy system' of support. This means you can talk to other schools about common problems. Together, you can share your experience of common problems and share what solutions you have found. You can do joint projects and support each other through difficult times.

Bringing it into the school curriculum

Once you have set up an FFZ, you will need to think about ways to include education about guns and crime in the school curriculum. The following topics could be included:

1. **Dangers of guns and other weapons.** Learners need to learn about the harm that guns can do, and why your school has decided to keep guns out.
2. **Alternatives to crime.** Learners can find out about more constructive ways of getting what they want.
3. **Alternative ways of resolving conflict.** Learners need to learn the life-skills that will allow them to deal with differences without resorting to violence. (See page 34 for ideas on how to do this.)

You may want to use life-skills sessions to teach learners about these issues. But you could easily integrate learning about violence and its alternatives into other learning areas. You could, for example, set maths problems using recent figures on injuries and deaths from firearms in Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences. Or you could use Human and Social Sciences to teach about why we have a problem with guns in South Africa, and include stories of people who have found ways to solve problems that don't use guns or violence.

See the educator resource sheets and poster provided with this book for curriculum-related activities.

Sending out ambassadors

Would you like to encourage other schools in your area, or in other areas, to become gunfree too? You could send ambassadors to these schools to tell them why your school decided to become an FFZ, how you went about it, and what the benefits are. Ambassadors can be chosen from learners, educators or parents, or they could be a mixed group. Your experience could help another school take the same road to get rid of guns.

Taking the idea of an FFZ further

Making your school a firearm free zone (FFZ) is not the end of the story. You can use discussion about FFZs to begin talking about alternatives to violence. For example, you may want to help members of your school to deal with anger and solve problems differently. You may also want to try to identify learners at risk of getting into trouble before problems start, and offer them counselling.

Coping with anger

Learners and educators often get out of control and resort to violence when they are angry. So it is important to educate everyone in other ways to manage anger.

Make sure everyone in the school community knows how to control anger. Here are some ideas that you might find useful:

- ❖ Walk away from the person you are angry with if you can't talk the problem through.
- ❖ Take a deep breath and push out the anger as you breathe out.
- ❖ Hit a pillow really hard.
- ❖ Write down all your angry thoughts and when you are finished, tear the paper up.
- ❖ Find someone you trust, that you can talk to about your anger.
- ❖ Push against a solid wall with your hands. Imagine pushing the anger away as you do this.

❖ Hit a ball hard.

❖ Go somewhere quiet and shout the anger out.

Once everyone involved has cooled down, it is much easier to talk about the problem behind the anger.

Solving problems without violence

It is possible to learn to solve problems without fighting or resorting to violence.

Help learners and teachers to find alternate ways of dealing with conflict.

Here are some steps that learners and educators can take to solve a problem instead of fighting:

1. Stop shouting or screaming at each other. Cool down and agree that there is a problem to sort out.
2. Decide together what the problem is really about.
3. Now decide together to attack the problem, not the person. There is no need to insult, threaten or blame anyone.
4. Let everyone involved in the problem make suggestions on how to solve it. Write a list.
5. Look at all the ideas. Decide which ones will work and which ones will not.
6. Choose one idea and try it out. See whether it works.
7. If it doesn't work, try another idea on your list.

Improving learners' self-esteem

Another way to make your school a more peaceful place is to work at improving learners' self-esteem. Self-esteem is about learners having a good opinion of themselves and liking themselves. Learners with high self-esteem have respect for themselves and also respect others more.

How can you improve learners' self-esteem? One important way is to encourage them through praise for what they can do well. Every learner has something that is special about them. Build on the positive, no matter how small it is.

Avoid criticising or blaming the learner. Instead, encourage the person to acknowledge their skills and achievements, and to not get discouraged by failure. Help the learner to look forward to the future, making plans that are realistic and achievable. Breaking up long-term goals into smaller micro-goals often makes it easier to achieve the bigger dream.

Your support and encouragement of learners can make a difference in getting them to make a success of their lives.

Offering counselling

An important way to reduce conflict in schools is through having counselling available. Counselling needs to target the learners that are most at risk of getting into trouble. If these learners can be identified early and offered help, there is much less risk that they will develop problem behaviour and grow up to be problem adults. In this way we can make a big contribution towards preventing future problems in our society.

Who are the learners that are at risk? These are some of them:

- ❖ learners with learning difficulties, and learners who are struggling to succeed at school
- ❖ learners who cannot concentrate in class
- ❖ learners whose school performance shows a sudden dramatic drop from what it used to be
- ❖ learners who have been victims of violence (including bullying and corporal punishment)
- ❖ learners who have witnessed violence, including violence in the family
- ❖ learners who become withdrawn or sad

- ❖ learners who worry a lot or seem very scared
- ❖ learners who are always alone, or who cannot seem to make friends
- ❖ learners who abuse alcohol or drugs
- ❖ learners who are aggressive or fight a lot with other learners
- ❖ learners who lie, steal or bully other learners
- ❖ learners whose behaviour suddenly changes for the worse for no apparent reason.

What is counselling? Counselling means giving the learner the chance to talk to another person in private. The counsellor listens without interrupting or offering advice. He or she does not judge or criticise. The counsellor should try to listen with an open mind. Then the counsellor and learner talk about possible solutions to the problem. They find a solution together.

There are many organisations that offer professional counselling services; ask one of the organisations on page 41 for advice.

Beyond the school

Getting guns out of schools is an important achievement. But you may well find yourself thinking about the wider community. Maybe you don't just want to create safer schools, but also safer communities. How can you make your community a better place to live in?

These are just some of the steps communities have taken to build safer and better communities:

- ❖ Make sure alcohol is only available at licensed venues, and alcohol is not made available to minors.
- ❖ Organise safe transport in your community.
- ❖ Remove high grass and bushes from open areas where attackers can hide.

- ❖ Organise community social get-togethers, where community members can get to know each other.
- ❖ Negotiate with your local council for safe street lighting.
- ❖ Plan after-school activities at your school for young people, so they don't drift into crime.
- ❖ Report crime and criminals to police.
- ❖ Start a community group to discuss violence and what can be done about it.
- ❖ Train community members in negotiation skills, so they can help solve problems without using violence.

Healing the wounds of the past

Once your school has become an FFZ, you can begin to think about healing the wounds caused by violence in the past.

Violence and trauma have affected us all. Many of us have lived in fear of violence. Some of us have been the victims of violence in its many forms or have witnessed violence.

As well as violence at school, learners and teachers have suffered from violence in the home and in the community. Women are especially prone to being victims of violence, in the form of physical or sexual abuse, and rape. It is often forgotten, but women and girls are at most danger of experiencing such violence at home - where they should be feeling most safe.

And don't forget that having witnessed violence or trauma can in itself be traumatising.

But we can take action to help reclaim lives from violence and trauma!

A very useful way to help learners who are survivors of violence is to offer peer counselling. Another good option is to allow those who have been traumatised by violence to share their stories in a group setting.

Peer counselling

Learners, especially youth, find it hard to talk to adults about what bothers them. But they often find it easier to talk to people of their own age - their peers. Peers relate to their problems more easily than adults because they are facing similar emotions or situations. This is why it is useful to train peer counsellors.

Who makes a good peer counsellor? Someone who is self-disciplined, shows leadership, can talk and listen well, and is self-confident and liked.

Peer counsellors usually have a natural ability to be good counsellors. But they still need the support and supervision of an educator. And they need training to carry out their task. The training should lead the peer counsellors through the following steps:

1. Show warmth and acceptance to the learner with the problem.
2. Keep eye contact and show interest.
3. Show empathy - this is like putting yourself into the other person's shoes, so you can feel what they are going through.
4. Ask questions to explore the nature of the problem.
5. Reflect back the feelings that the learner is having.
6. Keep your own feelings under control.
7. Summarise the problem at the end.
8. Talk about possible solutions.
9. Work out with the learner the best solution and the steps needed to carry it out.

Peer counsellors need to be given supervision. This means that about every two weeks, the counsellors need to speak to an older or more experienced person about what they have heard in counselling. This gives them the chance to unload. It is really important, especially if they have heard very painful or difficult stories of trauma.

Telling their stories

People find great healing power in telling their individual stories. One of the best ways to do this is in a group setting, where learners who have survived trauma get the chance to talk about what they have been through, under the guidance of a group leader (such as a teacher or community member) who has more experience of life.

The big advantage of a group is that the members can offer each other real support. This is because the person who best understands another's trauma is a person who has been through a similar trauma. A group also gives its members the chance to share survival strategies and inspire each other with hope.

The group is not there to make the survivors relive their trauma. They can talk about what they went through, but only as far as they are comfortable to do so.

Nobody should be pushed to talk about anything they don't want to. This is a very important rule for the group.

Group members can help each other by talking not only about the 'bad story' of the trauma, but also about the 'alternative story' of courage, of not being defeated or giving up hope. Survivors have important stories of courage to tell. And in telling the story to others, the person telling the story is also strengthened.

Trauma survivors in a group can share their answers to these important questions:

- ❖ What strength in you helped you to survive the trauma?
- ❖ What helped you to not lose hope of surviving?
- ❖ What helped you after the trauma to pull yourself together?
- ❖ What has helped you since, to keep hope alive?
- ❖ What strength in yourself did you discover through the trauma?

Symptoms of trauma

- ❖ What steps do you want to take now to get back your life?
- ❖ What support do you want from other people in the group to do this?

Watch out for these symptoms. If somebody shows five or more of the following symptoms, they may be suffering the after-effects of trauma. Speak to the person about your concern, and invite them to talk to you or to a counsellor.

- ❖ Bad dreams
- ❖ Bad memories coming back
- ❖ Being very jumpy
- ❖ Poor concentration
- ❖ No interest in life
- ❖ Feeling anxious or very nervous
- ❖ Feeling scared most of the time
- ❖ Getting angry or fighting a lot
- ❖ Problems in sleeping

Organisations that can help you

The organisations listed below can offer various kinds of help in setting up a firearm free zone, in training counsellors, and in learning alternative ways of handling conflict. Contact them to see if they can help you. If they are not able to do so, they may be able to suggest an alternative organisation in your area.

Gun Free South Africa



Website: www.gfsa.org.za
Twitter: @GunFreeSA
Email: info@gfsa.org.za

Project (CRISP)

2702 Old Mutual Centre,
303 West St, Durban 4001
Tel (031) 305-8422
Fax (031) 305-8420
e-mail: CRISP@nu.ac.za

Runs counselling and education programmes about crime, conflict and trauma.

Safe Schools Project, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

PO Box 30778,
Braamfontein 2017
Tel (011) 403-5650
Fax (011) 339-6785
e-mail: info@csvr.org.za

Offers courses in handling problems peacefully, and also offers counselling for survivors of violence and trauma.

Centre for Conflict Resolution (University of Cape Town)

PO Box 1228,
Cape Town 8000
Tel (021) 422-2512
Fax (021) 422-2622
e-mail: louw@ccr.uct.ac.za

Offers a course for teachers on creative and constructive approaches to conflict.

Quaker Peace Centre (Cape Town)

3 Rye Rd, Mowbray,
Cape Town 7700
Tel (021) 685-7800
Fax (021) 686-8167
e-mail: gpc@wn.apc.org

Runs courses for youth in life skills and conflict management, trains youth workers and youth leaders, and helps schools develop a more peaceful school environment.

Centre for Conflict Resolution and Human Rights Education

P O Box 12376,
Brandhof 9324
Tel (051) 448-8200/2/43
Fax (051) 448-3517
e-mail: willem.cecor@cscope.co.za

Runs workshops on conflict resolution for teachers. Also provides support for conflict management processes in schools.

Help Increase the Peace Project

PO Box 69076,
Bryanston 2021
Tel (011) 706-1997/086-010-2522
Fax (011) 463-7788
e-mail: mail@avpsa.com

Trains educators and learners in conflict resolution skills to help create a more caring school community.

African Pathways Youth Development Organisation

Suite no. 24 Postnet, PO Box 5981,
Pietersburg North 0750
Tel/Fax (015) 297-0387
Fax/Tel (015) 297-7016

Can organise training courses on conflict resolution for schools. Also provides advice and contact details of other organisations working in the area of youth leadership development and training.

Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA)

PO Box 2800, Kempton Park 1620
Tel (011) 975-7106/7
Fax (011) 975-7108
e-mail: famsa@global.co.za

Runs various life skills programmes. Contact the national office for details of their provincial offices

Northern Province Youth Development Organisation

Suite 261, Postnet X9307,
Pietersburg 0700
Tel/Fax 015-295-4970/1
e-mail: npydo@sn.apc.org

Runs various life skills and youth development programmes.

National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO)

PO Box 10005, Caledon Square
7905
Tel 021-422-1225
Fax 021-422-1550
e-mail: nicro@wn.apc.org

Runs crime prevention and youth at risk programmes for youth in conflict with the law. Offers various life skills programmes. Contact the national office for details of their provincial offices.