



CHILDREN AND TOY GUNS

GUN CONTROL

TO GET YOU THINKING

Mexico: Amnesty for children's toy weapons

Children in a violence-scarred province of Mexico are turning in toy weapons for non-violent types of toys. In a government campaign, a few thousand children exchanged toy swords, rifles and even real knives for football and basketball equipment. The News website reports that a local official in the state of Nuevo Leon, Patricia Salazar Marroquin, says this campaign will help promote a culture of peace and teach kids about the negative symbolism of violent toys. "These actions remove the incentive for the use of violent games and promote family time," Salazar Marroquin says. Yo-yos, jacks, spinning tops and Lego are being given out to promote learning.

South Africa has its own experience of gun hand-ins. When GFSA launched its national gun hand-in campaign

in August 1994, many children called to ask if they could hand in their toy guns.

One of the results was a partnership between GFSA and READ, a national literacy organisation, in which children in both pre-schools and primary schools in Soweto were given books in exchange for their toy guns. The OK Bazaars also made an enormous contribution to the toy-gun campaign by removing all toy guns from their shelves just weeks before Christmas, and publicly destroying all its stocks with a bulldozer in front of the Johannesburg City Hall.

This sowed the seed for ongoing projects on toy guns which has included toy-gun destructions, making schools gun free zones and educating children on the risks of having a gun in the home.

? QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

After reading the article above, motivate with supporting examples, whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

'Toy guns are dangerous'

SOURCE: BBC and Kirsten, Adele. 2008. A nation without guns? The story of Gun Free South Africa. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press

Remember



Remember to be respectful of sharing sensitive and private information. You can tell a story without giving personal details.

TO GET YOU THINKING

Randfontein man dies after being shot – allegedly by granddaughter (8 year old)

A Randfontein man has died in hospital a week after his eight-year-old granddaughter accidentally shot him.

“The man died yesterday in the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto due to his critical injuries,” David Masedi of the SAPD told YOU.

Last week YOU reported that the eight-year-old girl had thought the firearm was a toy gun when she shot her grandfather in the forehead, just above the eye, on Tuesday (3 April).

YOU magazine visited the family at their brown face-brick home in Helikon Park where a member of the family, who asked not to be named, confirmed the heart-breaking news.

The source was overcome with emotion twice and told us that it was an incredibly difficult time for the family, several of whom have already undergone trauma counselling. Because the case is so sensitive, the family member didn’t want to elaborate any further on how the incident occurred.

The grandfather’s wife and grandchildren were reportedly all in the bedroom at the time of the incident. Shortly after the shot was fired at around 7:10 am, the paramedics and police were called to the house in Helikon Park in Randfontein.

“On their arrival at the scene paramedics rushed to the bedroom of the house, where they found the man in his bed,” ER24’s Russel Meiring said in a media statement on 3 April.

The grandfather suffered a critical head injury and was taken to the hospital in a serious condition, where he died of his injuries a week later.

Masedi confirms that the charge of attempted murder would now be changed to murder. “The case is still being investigated,” he says.

Dr Llewelyn Curlewis, a legal expert from Pretoria, says that if the eight-year-old girl did pull the trigger, she won’t face charges of murder.

“That would only happen if it was proven that she shot him intentionally, which is unlikely.”

He also added that it’s highly likely that the case will be changed to one of negligent possession of a firearm.

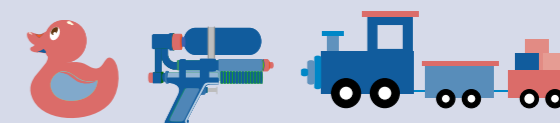
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Which section of the Firearms Control Act (2000) was not obeyed in this story?

What are some of the issues around gun laws and regulation of those laws in South Africa that this story brings to light?

DID YOU KNOW?

IN ONE WEEK, 750 PEOPLE PLAY “SPLATT-ATTACK”, A CONFLICT SIMULATION GAME IN WHICH TEAM PLAYERS COMPETE AGAINST ONE ANOTHER BY SHOOTING PAINTBALLS WITH AIR GUNS, AT ONE OF THE 5 PLAYING FIELDS IN THE GREATER JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN AREA.



Consumers have a choice of over forty plastic toy guns sold at 86% of toy shops and 74% of grocery and appliance chain stores in the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area.

The Firearms Control Act (2000) does not recognise airguns, also called BB or non-powder guns as being real firearms. As such their sale and use are unregulated, and they are freely sold in shops and supermarkets across South Africa. This is despite America viewing these ‘toys’ as a public health hazard because the velocity of pellets shot by them is the same as a gun, which you need a licence for. Velocity is how fast something moves in a certain direction.

ARE TOY GUNS DANGEROUS?

Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) advises the following:

- that parents are encouraged to buy toys that have educational value rather than buying toy guns and to ask others not to buy their children toy guns.
- Every toy given to children carries the message that we approve of that toy. So, when parents buy toys that suggest real weaponry, children are encouraged to play at violence.
- that children be taught creative responses to conflict, instead of the dominant current message that guns and violence are a solution.
- that parents and caregivers don’t stop children from playing games involving make-believe guns. Children often play games involving violent deaths and this dramatic play gives children the opportunity to

feel powerful and invincible. Instead, GFSA advises parents and caregivers to help children set limits when playing with make-believe guns. For example, make-believe guns should not be pointed at anyone who is not actively participating in the agreed-upon game.

- that parents and caregivers give educational toys to their children instead of military toys. Parents and educators can help promote educational toys and games by;
 - encouraging schools to become war-toy free zones and banning war toys
 - rewarding children’s play with toys that promote pro-social behaviour such as co-operation, turn-taking, helping and sharing. In this way, a secure environment is created for children that is free from threat, both real and in play.

Pop Quiz!

Twitter has followed Apple’s lead by changing its pistol emoji to a harmless, bright green water gun. This change effectively communicates that a gun doesn’t have a place in the pictorial language people commonly use when messaging on mobile devices.

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK TWITTER’S CHANGE OF EMOJIS FROM A REAL LOOKING GUN TO A GREEN WATER PISTOL WILL CHANGE OUR CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION?

**EXTRA
RESOURCES ON
THIS TOPIC**

- If you have been a victim of gun violence and need emotional support: SADAG, 011 234 4837
- For more information about gun laws: SAPS National Firearms Call Centre, (012) 353 6111
Firearms Control Act

CHILDREN AND TOY GUNS: MYTHBUSTERS

MYTH	FACT
It's a toy gun. It can't really harm anyone!	Every toy we give our children carries the message that we approve of that toy. Children's play is a rehearsal for real life as they try out roles and practice being an adult by using tools that adults use. Do we want them to practice violence?
My children will play with guns whatever I do, I can't stop them!	As parents and caregivers we are still able to teach children about what is and isn't acceptable in society. When our children try out swearing, hitting or spitting we let them know this behaviour won't be tolerated. In the same way, we can guide them in their approaches towards guns and gun violence.
Play is play, violence is violence. I teach my kids the difference between a toy and a real gun.	Studies show that adults often overestimate a child's capacity to know the difference between a real and a toy gun and that four and five year olds cannot distinguish real and toy guns at all. Even six and seven year olds can only make the distinction if they pick up the gun to determine its weight.

RESOURCES

The videos below are mainly from the United States, a country with one of the highest rates of gun violence in the world. The videos show how toy guns were mistaken for real guns, resulting in the deaths of children and young people.

They also show how children have been seriously injured by 'toy' pellet guns. These videos may show tragedies in other countries, but they are not unheard of in South Africa.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_depoZYRdw
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/bang-the-troubled-legacy-of-toy-guns/2014/12/22/96494ea8-86f8-11e4-9534-f79a23c40e6c_story.html?utm_term=.4af0c4e029c8
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyG8ASjFlq8>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZSAIsPie60>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-wb-gb_6Ew
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-baby-scientist/201801/violent-media-and-aggressive-behavior-in-children>

RESOURCES

South African news sources:

- <https://www.news24.com/southafrica/news/toy-guns-not-good-for-kids-20091117?cpid=2>
- <https://omny.fm/shows/early-breakfast-with-abongile-nzelenzele/toy-guns-and-the-influence-on-children>
- <http://www.enca.com/south-africa/sacks-gold-toy-guns-police-raid-illegal-miners-hideout>

DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT CHILDREN AND TOY GUNS

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of children and toy guns.

You have many examples of how to develop your outreaches and radio shows from previous guides. Use them to expand on some of the angles below.

- ❓ How do toy guns and toy weapons encourage violent behaviour?
- ❓ What are the ways we can make parents and caregivers understand the role of toy guns in a child's development?
- ❓ What are the ways we can talk about conflict resolution techniques and peace in our homes, schools and the rest of our community?
- ❓ What are the ways we can encourage our children to play in ways that teach important social interaction skills and which promote their safety?

SOURCE: Gun Free South Africa