

GUNS AND GANGS

GUN CONTROL



DEFINITIONS

What is a gang?

- Gangs have many different levels of involvement and types of participation, which makes defining them somewhat complicated.
- Countries across the world define gangs differently, but there are a few general characteristics of a gang that include:
 - A group larger than three people
 - A common identity, name and/or other identifier
 - Being engaged in illegal activity which includes the use of violence

Who is a member of a criminal gang?

According to the Prevention of Organised Crime Act, No. 121 of 1998 of South Africa, when deciding if a person is a member of a criminal gang, a court must take the following into account:

- whether the person admits to being a member of the gang;
- if the person is identified as a gang member by a parent or guardian;
- whether the person lives in the gang's territory and adopts their style of dress and other mannerisms;
- if the person has been arrested more than once with other gang members for crimes typically committed by the gang; and
- whether the person is identified as a member of the gang by physical evidence such as photographs and other documentation.

Source: What the law says

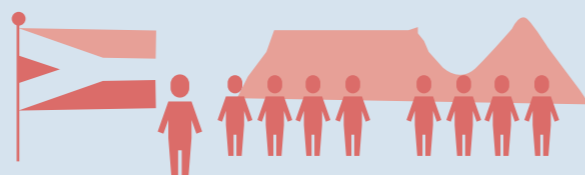
There are some general things we can say about gangs:

- Generally speaking, gangs are found in most cities across the world, especially in overcrowded and low income urban areas
- mostly exist within particular urban structures, like blocks of flats, low-cost neighbourhoods and informal dwellings
- generally exist in areas of relative (not absolute) poverty
- mainly involve young men
- have to do with identity
- often formed to replace poor parental attachments, they become a surrogate family
- almost always have connections to drugs
- involve people who often have either mental and/or physical health challenges
- involve people who often have education issues
- often, but not always, have links to a criminal economy
- often have a bad/dangerous reputation and use it

Source: Safer Spaces

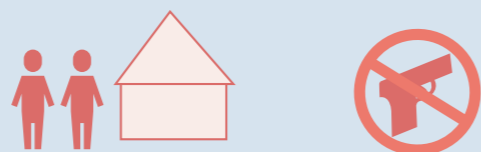
TO GET YOU THINKING

The daily lives of many young people in South African communities do not reflect the promises of democracy. As a result, street gangs provide material benefits and support structures, including a network of relationships and a sense of identity - this is especially true for young men.

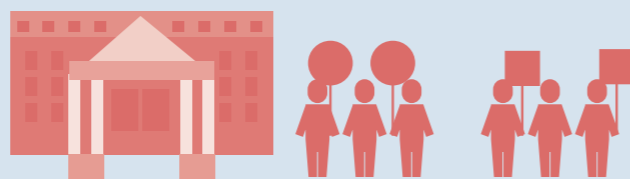


Power and poverty are at the heart of organised criminal gangs in South Africa.

As people living in poverty seek access to resources, they become vulnerable to exploitation by powerful gangs. Gangs gain control of communities by providing for community members and become powerful role models by showing off their wealth. Vulnerable youth from at-risk family backgrounds are often attracted to this kind of power. Some of the features of at risk families include, absent father figures, poor access to education and other opportunities, and family members involved in crime or being in prison.



Young people's needs are not being met by their family and other institutions such as churches, schools and the state. Factors such as low economic status, broken social bonds and social structures, coupled with inequality and frustration about their status in society, all contribute to youth joining gangs.



Source: SaferSpaces
Addressing youth needs

? DISCUSS THE ADAPTED ARTICLE ABOVE

What are the non-punitive ways that young people can be discouraged from joining a gang?
Non-punitive means something that does not involve punishment.

What does "broken social bonds" mean? Can you think of any real-life examples?

What are the needs of young people that are not being met? How can we we begin to address those needs?

What are your networks of relationships that build you as a person and make it less likely that you are vulnerable to the influence of gangs?

Where do gangs get their guns?

Because illegal guns are outside of any control, they are highly prized by gang members who cannot access them through legal channels. All illegal guns were once legal before they leaked from the legal to illegal pool. The loss and theft of legally owned guns is by far the most significant way in which legal guns are leaked into the illegal market. It's a myth that only police guns arm criminals: The biggest source of illegal guns in South Africa come from civilian gun owners. For the 2016-17 financial year, civilians reported that 8,948 guns were lost or stolen - an average of 25 guns a day. Police members reported 760 guns being lost or stolen - an average of 2 guns a day. The first step to stopping legal guns leaking into the illegal pool is to make sure that all licensed gun owners are "fit and proper" to own a lethal weapon, so that they store the gun properly when it is not in use thereby reducing the chance that it will get lost or stolen.

Source: Gangs and guns

DID YOU KNOW?

EVIDENCE OF ORGANISED CRIME IN SA DATES BACK TO EARLY MINING COMMUNITIES IN THE 1800'S. THIS IS WHEN GANGS OF ROBBERS REGULARLY COMMITTED CRIMES IN LARGE GROUPS.

Gangs are different throughout the world, even within a country or province. In the case of the Western Cape, the type of gangs change dramatically from one neighbourhood to the next.



Every year almost a quarter of a million people under the age of 30 are murdered globally. For every young person killed by violence, 20 to 40 more become victims of violence and require hospitalisation.

There is no single reason that explains why some youth resort to violence. It is the exposure to a variety of risk factors - ranging from the experience of violence to dysfunctional family structures or drug abuse - that can draw a young person into violence and crime. This experience is made worse by social marginalisation, poverty or a lack of future prospects.



BEING EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE AFFECTS PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY. IF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE EXPOSED TO OR BECOME VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, THERE IS A HIGH RISK THAT THEY WILL SHOW VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR THEMSELVES AT A LATER STAGE.



In South Africa, we have a law that can be used to prosecute gangs. It is called the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA). The purpose of this Act is to prevent organised crime and gang activities, with a special focus on money-laundering and racketeering or illegal business activities. Crimes related to gangs, money-laundering or racketeering can be prosecuted in terms of this Act, even if the crime was committed before the Act was enacted, or if it was committed by a South African in another country.



Source: 1. Safetylab
2. Organized crime

REMEMBER

Loving attachment is essential in forming resilient children. Resilience is what helps young people succeed in life and avoid gangs, drugs and early parenthood.

Source: Safer Spaces

MYTHBUSTERS: IF YOU ARE IN A GANG...

| MYTH | FACT |
|--|--|
| You'll be able to protect your family from a gang. | Other gangsters don't care where you are or who you are with when they decide to target you. It could be in broad daylight while you're with your family or at your home. Gangs and gang violence put everyone, including your loved ones, at risk too. |
| You'll make lots of money, have expensive cars, lots of stuff and be powerful. | You'll either be arrested, injured or killed. Your cars, property, drugs and money will most likely all be taken away by other gang members or seized by the police when you're caught. |
| You can always get out whenever you want. | It is very difficult to leave a gang once you've joined. You'll need help from the police, your family and friends, and others. Your gang's leaders will usually make your debts to the gang so high, with the threat of violence if you don't pay, that it makes it seem impossible to leave. If you do manage to get out, you'll have to remove or cover up your gang tattoo(s) and any scars or marks from the gang initiation. |
| Gangs are a police problem. | Gangs are everyone's problem. Communities, government, police, educators and even families and friends of gang members need to commit to work together to end gang crime and the devastating effects gangs have on our communities. Everyone must work towards a common goal and take a stand against gangs and gang crime for gang prevention to work. |

Source: Gang life myths

RESOURCES

- > **Teenage Gangs in Cape Town:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImNHcRusc_w
- > **Gangs in South African townships:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kG8JxnqOluw>
- > **Drugs and gangs and guns in South Africa:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU8PgJrSr70>
- > **Interview with a gang hitman in Cape Town:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPQCbliGkgY>
- > **Former gang member:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMsOXxl7EpM>

DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT GUNS AND GANGS

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of guns and gangs.

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.



What are the ways to we can prevent gangsterism as a community?



What are the ways we can prevent gangs from accessing guns?



What are the ways we can make communities more resilient against accepting support from gangsters?



Is more policing the answer to addressing gang problems?



Is there gang activity in your community? How does it affect life for everyone?