



Make your school  
a firearm free zone

## A gun free school?

### A problem with guns

Thabiso Mollo comes from Diepkloof in Soweto. In 1994 he was a learner 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 (Student Representative Council) 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 Service. 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 (South African Democratic Teachers Union). 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."

### A gun free school

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.

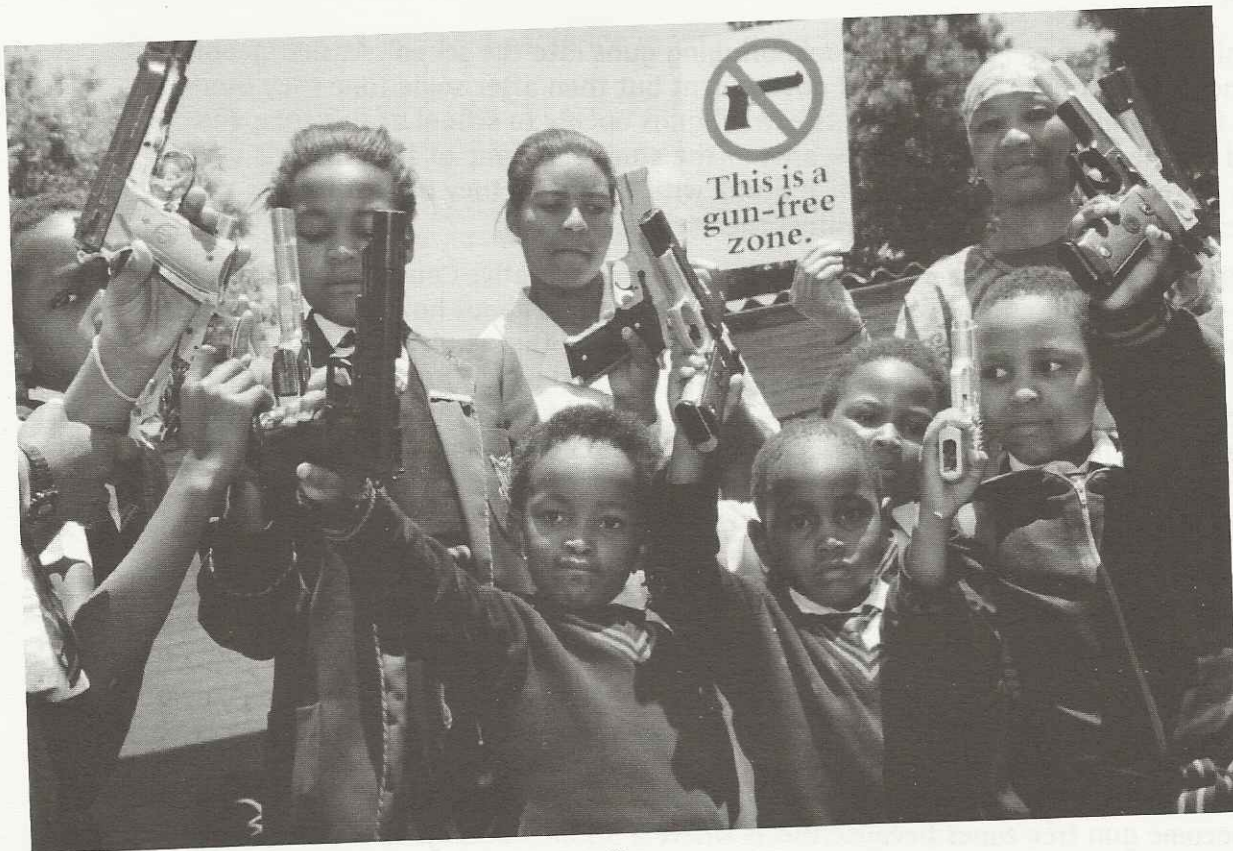
"Diepkloof is a very violent community. Shootings are a daily happening in our community, many of the children in our school have been orphaned because of gun violence. You are not free to move around here because you are afraid of the gun men, they are so powerful they even rob your property like your 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.

The gun free zone sign reminds us that in this school guns are not seen as an answer. Everyone who visits here gets this message. I think it is a good thing to educate a child from childhood if we want a better community in the future. It is this next generation that will make sure Diepkloof is a peaceful place."



(Reproduced with permission from the *Sowetan*, 15 November 1999)

- ❖ What do you think about the decision taken at Ikaneng Primary School?
- ❖ Do you think it will impact on gun violence in the area in any way?
- ❖ What good things could arise from the fact that this school is now gun free?
- ❖ What are some of the problems that could arise from the fact that this school and others in the area have been declared gun free?
- ❖ Could you do this in your school? If yes, Why? If no, why not?

**READ THIS PAGE AND THEN TALK ABOUT THE QUESTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE**

## **When Ikaneng Primary School became a gun free zone there was no law in place to help them enforce it – now there is!**

### **Firearm free zones**

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.

### **What is a firearm free zone (FFZ)?**

The law says that an FFZ is any place that has been declared by the Minister for Safety and Security to be an FFZ. 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.

The Minister must consult with the National Commissioner 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 in an FFZ, he or she can be sent to prison for up to 25 years.



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**TALK ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS IN YOUR GROUP**

- ❖ If you made your school a firearm free zone do you think it would influence the violence in your school in any way?
- ❖ Would it influence the violence in your area in any way?
- ❖ Look at your vision picture, would making your school a firearm free zone be a step towards achieving your vision?
- ❖ Would you like to make your school a firearm free zone?

**If you would like to explore how you can make your school a firearm free zone then you will need to elect a working group. Your facilitator will explain this to you.**