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## **Islands of Safety in a Sea of Guns:**

Gun-free Zones in South Africa's

Fothane, Diepkloof, and Khayelitsha

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CPISA	Church of the Province of Southern Africa
CSVSR	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
GFSA	Gun-free South Africa
GFZ	Gun-free Zone
FCA	Firearms Control Act
FFZ	Firearm Free Zone
SAPS	South African Police Services
USD	US dollar
ZAR	South African rand

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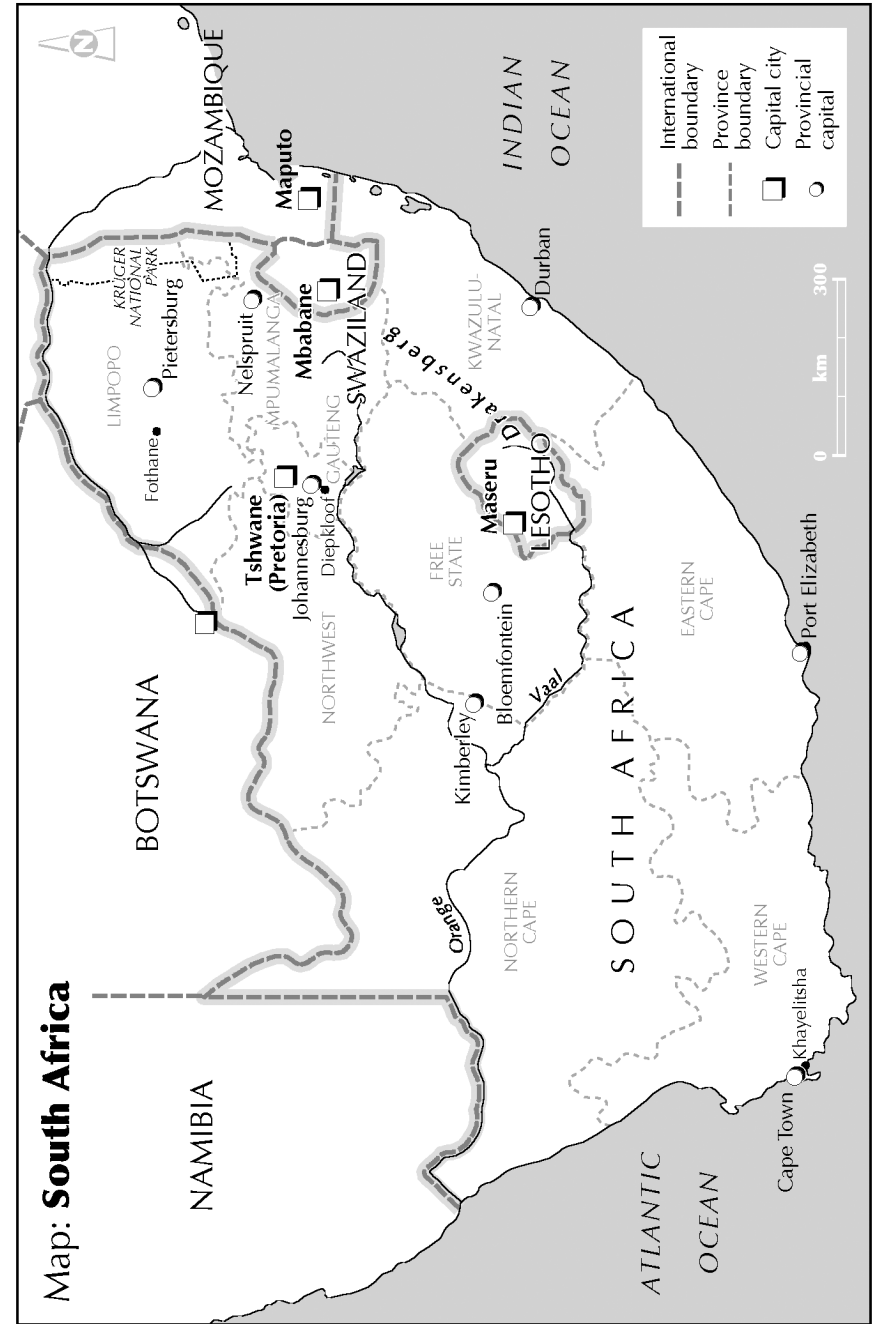
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## Summary

On 27 April 1994, millions of South Africans cast their votes in the country's first fully democratic general elections, signalling an end to more than 350 years of political rule by a white minority over the black majority. South Africa's history is one of colonial conquest, dispossession, segregation, and repression; one in which firearms played an important role in maintaining the border between the oppressed and the oppressor, between the colonized and the colonizer. With the state's implementation of apartheid policies after 1948, which further entrenched white rule, the military expanded its influence into all areas of social life, becoming a pervasive element in South African society. In response to the increased repression by the apartheid state, resistance organizations turned to armed violence as one strand in the strategy for national liberation. Many members of the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC) regarded themselves as soldiers fighting in a people's war. Although many held that South Africa was at war, it was generally accepted that the conflict was a low-level civil war, commonly referred to as 'low intensity conflict' (Cock and Nathan, 1989). As a result of several factors, such as internal mass mobilization against apartheid and increasing international pressure for a political solution to the South African conflict, negotiations for a new political dispensation started in 1990, culminating in a democratic constitution and the 1994 elections.

After these elections, South Africa continued to experience high levels of gun violence. Religious organizations and civil society began to express their concern that easy access to firearms and the excessive number of guns in South Africa constituted one of the biggest threats to the fledgling multiracial society. The response to this threat was the emergence of a national gun-free movement in South Africa.

A major component of this social movement was the creation of Gun-free Zones (GFZs)—social spaces where guns are prohibited—across South Africa. Today, there are hundreds of GFZs across the country. These are in educational

institutions, such as schools and universities; churches; community centres; health facilities, such as hospitals and local community clinics; NGOs; taverns and *shebeens* (unlicensed bars); banks; corporate buildings; local, provincial, and national government buildings; and in some public spaces such as sports stadiums. GFZs emerged, not just as a response to the high levels of armed violence that had marked the four years of negotiations prior to the 1994 general elections, but also because of people's experience of decades of structural and state-sponsored violence during the apartheid era.

This report looks both at the process whereby GFZs were set up and at the impact they have had to date. Quantitative data such as crime and firearms data, as well as a GFZ audit carried out in 2000, provide some broad insights, particularly at the national level. The qualitative data represents the more important part of this assessment because it highlights the nuanced processes and diverse impact of GFZs within different social contexts, identifying some of their unintended consequences. This qualitative data was gathered from three case studies in three provinces: Fothane in Mapela district, Limpopo Province; Diepkloof in Soweto, Gauteng Province; and Khayelitsha in the Cape Town metropolitan area, Western Cape Province. The case studies involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The three sites were chosen because all of them were known to have set up some form of GFZs in response to requests from community leaders to assist both in reducing gun violence and in creating a safer environment (see **A note on methodology**, below).

The study draws the following conclusions.

- **The flexibility of the GFZ process means that GFZs are implemented in a variety of forms depending on local needs and context.** This enables anyone to declare his or her premises a GFZ, making it difficult to determine the exact number of GFZs in South Africa. Although the proliferation of guns is an indicator of historic and current levels of violent conflict in South African society, GFZs are indicators of the commitment to an alternative vision of a peaceful social order. GFZs can be important innovations that play a critical role in some communities, enhancing social cohesion and providing residents with a tangible means through which to express their commitment to a more safe and secure society.

- **GFZs give people feelings of increased security and lead to real increases in safety, primarily, but not exclusively, within the GFZ venue.** This was most evident in the reported reduction of gunshots heard across all three case studies. This does not necessarily mean a direct reduction in the number of guns either in circulation or in use, but rather is an indication of how GFZs contribute to increased feelings of safety. This may primarily be influenced by the process of actively engaging in crime-prevention interventions, thereby empowering residents to do something about violence in their communities. In one particular community, the reported reduction in the number of gunshot victims presenting at a health facility and the reduction in the public carrying of firearms were further examples of the positive impact of GFZs.
- **Given the proliferation of firearms in contemporary South Africa, these ‘islands of safety’ may allow maximum grass-roots participation in building more secure social arenas.** The GFZ vision has been successful in mobilizing individuals and communities across South Africa to challenge gun ownership as normative behaviour and in support of the vision of a society in which people are free from the fear of gun violence. But the success of GFZs has been uneven and their impact limited because of several factors, such as the climate of crime and the high demand for guns, as well as the lack of resources and insufficient attention given to involving all role players in a participatory process during implementation of GFZs.
- **In almost all areas, regardless of context, the GFZ project has had a positive impact at the individual level.** It has changed individuals’ lives: in some instances it has given people, mostly young unemployed men, an opportunity to play a role in contributing to a more secure environment within their immediate communities. It has also given them meaning and status in their communities. The GFZ project has contributed to other violence-reduction projects such as the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation’s 40 schools project combined with the Tiisa Thuto project in Soweto.<sup>1</sup> These projects have contributed to a climate where guns are seen as unacceptable in some public spaces such as schools.
- **The GFZ project had a direct influence on the provision of Firearm-free Zones (FFZs) in the Firearms Control Act (FCA) of 2000, which was largely attributable to the innovative and public nature of the GFZ campaign.**

There have been long delays in finalizing the regulations attached to this Act, which were only completed in mid-2004, with the law coming into effect in July of that year. There has, therefore, not been a lot of practical experience with the law, and none that could be discussed in this paper.

- **An inclusive and participatory process in the implementation of GFZs is key to their success.** This is further enhanced by the presence of well-trained and well-motivated local community activists with good communication strategies enacted through the use of materials and workshops. Realizing the potential of GFZs depends on socially inclusive processes conducted in socially cohesive communities.
- **People expressed their dissatisfaction and frustration at the lack of standardized implementation and enforcement procedures, which they regarded as weakening the potential of the project.** The lack of a systematic enforcement policy or practice, which includes communication about the GFZ status of a particular area, weakens its impact and can lead to feelings of insecurity within the GFZ site. This contributes to the GFZ sign losing its meaning and capacity to challenge the norms of public gun carrying.
- **GFZs’ potential is not always realized because of the weakness and limited resources of the gun-free movement, in the sense of a grass-roots mobilization against the proliferation of firearms, led by Gun-free South Africa (GfSA), at both the local and national levels.** GFZs require high maintenance in the sense that for the gun-free sign to sustain its meaning and impact, residents need ongoing input and information on the gun debates in the country, not just on GFZs. This requires high levels of energy and resources, which raises a question about the sustainability of GFZs and therefore also of their replicability, either within the country or elsewhere.

## A note on methodology

The field research was conducted by four researchers from July to October 2004, using semi-structured informant interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation based on two researchers’ experience with GfSA. GfSA is a small NGO founded in 1994 that has been a leading force in the gun-control movement in South Africa. The two GfSA researchers played a crucial

role in conceptualizing and implementing GFSA's GFZ campaign, and this report draws on this experience and insight. Research also involved informant interviews and analysis of primary and secondary sources on the proliferation of guns in South Africa. Crime and firearms data was sourced primarily through national statistics released by the South African Police Services (SAPS, 2004).

Although all three case studies shared common characteristics, there are also significant differences between them, such as location (i.e. urban or rural), population density, and levels of violent crime. The GFZs across the three study sites were also implemented at different phases of the GFSA-led project. The research report analyses the similarities and differences among the three case studies, with particular reference to the process of establishing GFZs, their enforcement policies, and their impact—whether it be on perceptions and experiences of safety and security, challenging gun carrying and ownership as a norm, enhancing social cohesion, or influencing public policy.

In each case study, four GFZ types were chosen: a health clinic, a tavern (bar), a public community space such as a community hall or library, and a government-run secondary high school. Key informants were selected to illustrate the range of motivation and involvement of key social actors in the process. A sample of both the administrators or managers and the consumers or users of each of these social spaces was interviewed. Informant interviews were also held with the main initiators of the GFZ in each community: a police officer, a local town councillor, a GFSA activist, and a community-based social justice activist. Nine focus groups, consisting of between eight and ten participants each, were held with consumers and users in three of the GFZ sites across all three case studies (see Annexe 1 for focus group questions). A total of 53 interviews were conducted (see Annexe 2 for a list of people interviewed). ▣

## The research context

### The history of violence in South Africa

South Africa has inherited a 'culture of violence' embodied both in the violence of colonialism and apartheid, and a romanticization of the armed struggle and mythologizing of the AK-47 assault rifle (Cock, 1997). Guns have always been a feature of life in South Africa, especially over the last 50 years: whether they were small arms and light weapons distributed by the apartheid government to the young white conscripts used to defend the nation, or those in the hands of the white commandos spread throughout the country as the civilian-military arm of apartheid state protection, or those issued to the police and security forces of the semi-autonomous black homelands.

The response of members of the anti-apartheid liberation movements to this highly militarized and well-armed state and citizenry was to arm themselves, and so, especially in the latter years of apartheid, weapons in the hands of the country's black youth—as members of self-defence or self-protection units—became more common. This led to the generic term 'youth' being used in the townships to describe young men and women between the ages of 15 and 25. The term came to signify a culturally and politically separate identity, often associated with violence. Guns have also been an 'important weapon in maintaining the border between the oppressed and the oppressor, between the colonized and the colonizer' (Kirsten, 2001). The perceived masculine identity of colonizer and gun owner reinforced the racial dimension of gun ownership in South Africa, where, for most of the apartheid era, private firearm ownership was restricted to whites only. In the new dispensation, therefore, for some black South Africans, owning a firearm is thus one expression of having attained full citizenship rights under the new democratic government. This means that in the current context guns are highly related to race and linked to a militarized conception of citizenship.

South Africa experienced high levels of armed violence during the four years of the negotiated settlement (1990–94). Guns were no longer just in the hands



of the state and became increasingly available across all sectors of society, altering the nature of conflicts in the home and within and between communities. This legacy of violence continues to affect the new economic, social, and political relations being forged in South Africa's relatively recent post-apartheid democracy (Kirsten, 2004).

## Violence, crime, and security in South Africa

During the political transition from apartheid to an inclusive multiracial society, South Africa experienced a dramatic increase in violent crime and in its reporting. Between 1994 and 1999, violent crime (murder, attempted murder, rape, and all forms of robbery and assault) increased by 22 per cent. There has been a gradual stabilization and downward trend in most violent crime categories since 2000. Nevertheless, violent crime as a percentage of overall crime remains high and this 'sets South Africa apart from other crime-ridden societies' (Landman, 2003, p. 14). Multiple factors have contributed to high levels of violent crime in South Africa over the last ten years. These include the social tensions generated by the transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy, a culture of violence, inequality and the increasing wealth gap, and the proliferation of firearms.

The scale of violence and crime in South Africa means that these phenomena have become "routinized" or "normalized" into the functional reality of everyday life' (Moser, 2003). Violence is related to a complex set of economic, political, social, and institutional processes that contribute to making it a means of resolving conflict and gaining power, which in turn is related to the existence of so-called 'cultures of violence', in which society accepts violence as a legitimate solution to conflict. Winton refers to this as the 'democratization of violence', which is

*most often associated with countries that have recently undergone political transformation, or with those currently in transition, [where] increasingly arbitrary and random violence has significant effects both in terms of insecurity and in terms of the perpetuation of violence as a means of expression and defence (Winton, 2004).*

It also acts as a development constraint, negatively affecting people's livelihoods, well-being, and security.

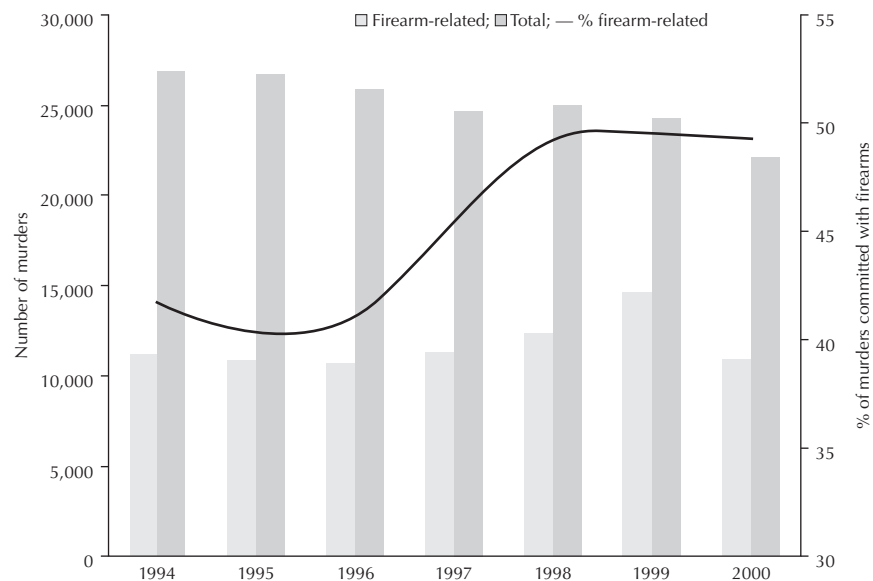
Despite a dramatic shift of personnel and budgetary resources from the military to the police since 1994, increasing numbers of citizens have lost confidence in the capacity of the state to protect them. The loss of citizens' confidence in the police to provide protection, expressed by some informants, as well as the inadequate allocation of resources, which contributes to very ineffective policing, will be shown in all of the case studies. 'Feeling insecure' is one of the most common factors that contribute to individuals wanting to buy or own a firearm. However, owning a firearm is not just about feeling secure, but more importantly, and especially among young men, it is also about their notion of masculine identity and power. This was clearly articulated by key informants and focus group participants and was most strongly expressed by the students at the GFZ schools in the two urban case studies. Guns offer a real and powerful alternative to young males excluded from educational opportunities, the legitimate economy, and other socially acceptable networks, such as sports and leisure activities.

## Firearms ownership and murder rates

South Africa is a heavily armed society. In 1994 there were 3.5 million licensed firearms in the hands of 2.4 million individuals.<sup>2</sup> Although licensed firearms ownership has increased in the last ten years, the rate of firearms ownership applications has slowed down considerably. South African civilians now own 3.7 million firearms, while the police and the army have 567,000 guns between them. South African civilians thus have more than six times as many firearms as those held by the state security forces (Gould and Lamb, 2004). In 1994, there were 26,832 murders in South Africa, of which 11,134 were committed with firearms. This equates to 28.8 firearms murders per 100,000 people (Chetty, 2000, p. 19). Although the number of murders in South Africa since 1994 has declined, the percentage of people killed by firearms increased from 41 per cent of all murders in 1994 to 49.3 per cent in 2000 (SAPS, 2004; Figure 1).

Most of the firearms are owned by men—whether in state structures, such as the police force or the military; for leisure or sport activities such as hunting; or for self-defence in the home. Likewise, the majority of firearms murder victims in South Africa are men. In 2003, 27.9 per cent of the 22,248 non-natural

Figure 1  
**Murders in South Africa, 1994–2000**



Source: SAPS (2004)

deaths recorded that year were firearms-related. For every female death from violence and injury, 4.4 male deaths were reported. Of the 17,932 male fatalities in 2003, the leading external cause of death was firearms at 31 per cent. Deaths attributed to violence and suicide are particularly high in the 15–44 year age group, peaking in the 25–29 year age group (Matzopoulos, 2004).<sup>3</sup>

Crime statistics show a significant drop in several violent crime categories. For example, murders peaked in 1995 at 26,877, staying at roughly this level for several years. Since 2000, the murder rate has been decreasing each year, with a total of 19,824 murders recorded in 2003–04. This represents a drop of more than 23 per cent since 1994. Despite this decrease, an average of 54 people are murdered every day in South Africa. Since 2000, no breakdown of the murder figures has been released by type of weapon/cause of death. However, 11,176 murders were committed with guns in 2000 and there were more than 21,000

attempted firearms murders. The data shows a decrease in actual numbers but an increase in the ratio of gun use to other murder weapons, both for murders committed with guns and for attempted firearms murders. In both the murder and attempted murder categories for 2000, handguns (pistols or revolvers) were the most commonly used weapons, with assault rifles used in 151 murder cases. Armed robbery (a category that covers firearms and other weapons) reached a high of 88,178 cases in 2000. Another firearms-related offence relevant to this study, and which is high compared to other countries for the period for which statistics are available (1994–2000), is that of ‘pointing of a firearm’. There have always been at least 20,000 such offences reported per year, peaking in 2000 at 27,933 (SAPS, 2004). The significance of this offence is that it demonstrates how firearms are often part of threatening behaviour in South Africa.

### Illegal arms trafficking

The Illegal Firearms Unit, which is part of the Serious and Violent Crime division of the SAPS, is the unit responsible for tracking the criminal use of firearms in South Africa. According to a senior officer in the unit, Superintendent Joubert, the majority of new weapons currently entering the illegal firearms market in South Africa come from theft and loss from licensed sources, such as state security officers in the police and the military, and from individual civilian owners, typically through house burglaries or direct theft.<sup>4</sup> Thefts and leakage from existing security stocks are also a source of illegally owned firearms. More than 200,000 firearms were reported stolen or lost by licensed private owners between 1994 and 2003. There is very little illegal arms trade across South Africa’s borders. When and if this does occur, it is usually undertaken by individuals bringing in arms, rather than by organized crime syndicates.<sup>5</sup> One of the reasons for the limited cross-border trade is that there is sufficient internal supply. Joubert argued that the cross-border trade in firearms was more likely to be from South Africa to neighbouring countries, rather than the other way around. The average price for a handgun is just below ZAR 500 (USD 76.50), with the highest price, approximately ZAR 800 (USD 122.40), reported in Soweto in Gauteng Province.<sup>6</sup> Handgun prices differ across the country but not significantly, as in the case of assault rifles. The price for an assault rifle is

much higher, reaching up to ZAR 3,500 (USD 53.55) in Durban, with the lowest price at ZAR 800 (USD 122.40) on the East Rand in Gauteng Province. The most-sought-after assault rifles are AK-47s and the apartheid military issue of R4s and R5s, which are very similar to the AK-47. Ammunition, which is increasingly hard to come by, is also sold on the illegal market. One round for an AK-47 costs from ZAR 1 (USD 0.15) to ZAR 10 (USD 1.53).<sup>7</sup> 📄

## I. A national strategy: GFSA's GFZ project

This section looks at the Gun-free Zone model as developed by Gun-free South Africa, and at the theory, planning, and processes undertaken to facilitate maximum community participation and optimal compliance with that model. GFSA recognized that the flexibility of the GFZ project would enable anyone to participate, declaring GFZs according to local needs and contexts. At the same time, and as the case studies will demonstrate, this flexibility also gave rise to GFZs taking on many different forms, with varying degrees of enforcement, compliance, and community participation.

### GFSA and the gun-free movement

The gun-free movement in South Africa dates back to 1994. This was a key year in the history of South Africa. On 27 April 1994, millions of South Africans cast their vote for the first post-apartheid democratically elected government. In the months leading up to the elections, Peter Storey,<sup>8</sup> then a bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and the initiator of the gun-free movement in South Africa, began to articulate his concern that the easy access to and excess of guns in South Africa was one of the biggest threats to the emerging democracy: 'We weren't basing our thinking on any statistics, on any research at all. Just the gut feeling that guns were beginning to dominate the scene in every way. That's all.'<sup>9</sup>

The response to this threat was the call for a 'gun-free' South Africa. It emerged not just as a response to the high levels of armed violence that had marked the four years of negotiations prior to the 1994 general election, but also because of people's experience of decades of structural and state-sponsored violence during the apartheid era. Although the threat of violence was present primarily through the structural violence of apartheid and the repressive violence of its security forces, it was also present in the anti-apartheid forces. According to a leading trade unionist at the time, there was a loss of control over the young



A sign at a youth centre designates it a gun-free zone. © Pep Bonet/Panos Pictures

anti-apartheid cadres known as youth, especially in the self-defence units.<sup>10</sup> In the 1980s, some of these engaged in some forms of criminal activity not for political ends. This contributed to the demand for guns and accelerated the movement of weapons into black communities.<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon was widely understood but not publicly acknowledged. Storey articulated it as:

*A growth of criminal violence which took place almost unnoticed under the mantle of political strife . . . Under the surface was an organized criminal campaign to establish violence as the main arbiter of social conduct so that the line between criminal and political violence is no longer clear at all.*<sup>12</sup>

On 16 December 1994, the minister of safety and security declared a 24-hour national amnesty on the handing in of weapons. Civil society, in particular religious institutions and gun-free South Africa activists, in partnership with government, set up 167 'hand-in' points across the country where firearms could be handed in. A total of 900 firearms and explosive devices, including 199 pistols, 42 AK-47s, 72 hand grenades, and more than 7,000 rounds of ammunition, were handed in across the country (Meek, 1998). Although this number was disappointing, the gun-free South Africa campaign had succeeded in putting the issue of national gun control on the political and social agenda.

A small NGO with a broad reach across the country, GFSA has three offices: a national office in Johannesburg; one in Cape Town, which plays a key role in maintaining links with the country's parliament; and a field office in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal province. It currently employs six people: a director, a national advocacy manager, one administrator, one regional organizer, and two field workers. Several of the NGO's functions, such as fundraising, media and communications, and research, are carried out by outside consultants. GFSA has a ten-person management board consisting of academics, activists, religious leaders, and grass-roots leadership. It has more than 30 voluntary committees organized into branches in eight of the country's nine provinces.

## The GFZ: Theory and process

### *History*

The idea for a GFZ campaign was first mooted at a GFSA national committee meeting in May 1995, at the same time as the organization decided to embark on a strategy to advocate for the bringing in of new national firearms legislation. The activists at the time were aware that pursuing this strategy at the expense of building a grass-roots movement could result in the organization remaining a small and isolated lobby group. A campaign was needed that was able to link the policy process with grass-roots mobilization. The GFZ was seen as an ideal vehicle through which to do this: it could involve communities directly in contributing to increasing their safety, as well as affecting government policy. Through this vehicle, GFSA was able to reach up into national policy-making levels and down into grass-roots communities.

Prior to GFSA initiating the GFZ campaign, there were some commercial institutions, such as banks and large corporations, that prohibited the carrying of firearms on their premises. However, these initiatives were simply a security measure and lacked any normative content. They were not, as in the case of GFSA's GFZ campaign, part of a community building agenda with the intention of transforming South Africa from a violence-ridden society into a gun-free society.

When GFSA started its campaign there were no similar campaigns anywhere else in the world, as far as could be ascertained (GFSA, 1996a). The GFZ campaign had two main objectives:

- in the short term to create space(s) in which people felt safe, as a practical immediate measure; and
- in the long term to shift public attitudes to guns by challenging the notion that guns bring security, thereby helping to reduce the demand for guns (GFSA, 1995a; 1995b).

One of the aims of the GFZ campaign was to enable people to do something practical about gun violence in their own communities and to make visible their support for and demonstrate their commitment to the vision of a gun-free South Africa. The GFZ campaign became an important entry point to working with communities on the issue of gun violence because it encouraged debate about the dangers of firearms and was the beginning of the process of mobilizing people at the grass-roots level.<sup>13</sup>

### *The model*

A GFZ is a space in which firearms and ammunition are not welcome and this is denoted by the 'no-gun' or 'gun-free' sign: a plastic sign showing a crossed-out gun and the inscription 'This is a gun-free zone.'

GFSA developed a participatory model, aimed primarily at residential communities, but which is also appropriate for institutions and organizations. The GFSA model relies on community participation to establish and maintain a GFZ.

The participatory GFZ model is based on three principles (Taylor and Dube, 2001) (see Annexe 3):

1. **Facilitation.** An individual or group of people who live in a community or work for an organization run the GFZ process. GFSA acts as a resource for the facilitators—brainstorming ideas with them, giving them advice, and providing them with materials such as signs and pamphlets.
2. **Participation and consultation.** Facilitators encourage different stakeholders to get together and discuss the issue of gun control and the implementation of GFZs. Partnerships between different stakeholders are promoted and cooperation is encouraged. These partnerships are essential for the maintenance and sustainability of GFZs, as different people take responsibility for making sure a GFZ remains gun-free.
3. **Flexibility.** The ideas and experiences of the people who are involved in turning a given space into a GFZ shape the process. The model used by GFSA is flexible enough to be used in different settings, turning schools, clinics, churches, and even *shebeens* into GFZs.

### *The process*

GFSA developed a workshop pack for community leaders and activists, providing them with the tools that equipped them to run workshops, and thus preparing people to declare public spaces such as church buildings, recreation centres, and health clinics GFZs. This was often done without any direct involvement of GFSA officers. This approach enabled communities to interpret the campaign according to their local needs and to implement accordingly. The pack included copies of GFZ signs for easy reproduction, as well as plastic signs displaying the gun-free logo: a red circle around a gun with a diagonal slash through the gun. This simple visual image transmitted a clear message: 'no guns allowed'. It required few words to explain its meaning. Restricting the use of firearms was central to the GFZ message. The process of becoming a GFZ was integral to the campaign and was based on the idea that if those who had ownership of the building (not necessarily materially, but in the social sense of using the space) agreed to become gun-free, it made it far easier to implement, monitor, and maintain the policy (GFSA, 1996b). It must be emphasized that these were guidelines, not a rigid blueprint for implementation. The key to the entire GFSA approach was its flexible, non-prescriptive nature, rooted in responsiveness to specific community needs.

One of the underlying purposes of the campaign was to build community support and solidarity around the call for a gun-free South Africa. It was also seen as a peace-building tool that could ‘metre by metre’ help to reclaim a land ‘awash with guns’, thereby acting as an instrument of transformation (Newby, 2000). As the campaign got off the ground and the gun-free signs became visible in a variety of settings such as the Alexandra Health Clinic, the Central Methodist Missions in Johannesburg and Cape Town, the Gauteng Province legislature, and almost all the public buildings in the rural village of Fothane, GFSa realized the strength of the signs’ visual impact. Without using many words, a powerful message was being conveyed to South Africans as they went about their daily business, whether it was going to work, dropping their children off at school, or visiting a clinic. GFSa held that, just as the ‘no-smoking’ signs placed in lifts and some public buildings had slowly embedded themselves in the public’s consciousness, the gun-free signs could begin to have the same impact in changing the meaning of guns for South Africans.

## The implementation of GFZs

### *Nature and types of GFZs*

GFZs are now widespread throughout South Africa.<sup>14</sup> They are found in educational institutions such as schools and universities; in churches; in community centres; in health facilities such as hospitals and local community clinics; at NGOs; in taverns and *shebeens*; at banks and other corporate buildings; in local, provincial, and national government buildings; and at some public spaces such as sports stadiums. Examples of GFZs include the Quaker Peace Centre, St. Mary’s Cathedral in central Johannesburg, the Mangaung Community Development Centre and Cancer Association of South Africa in Bloemfontein, the Gauteng Education Department, and the national headquarters of corporations such as BP and Anglo-American.

The most commonly identified types of GFZs are:

- corporates such as BP, the banking sector, and other big businesses;
- municipal and provincial government buildings, in particular those used by the public, including libraries, local property tax and electricity offices, and hospitals;

- national government buildings, in particular those such as the Union Buildings in Tshwane (previously Pretoria) (the seat of national government), Parliament in Cape Town, and any other building considered a national strategic point;
- NGOs;
- religious institutions;
- educational institutions such as schools and universities; and
- taverns.

GFSa made strategic choices about the types of venues and institutions to target for the GFZ campaign. These were based on several factors such as a sympathetic leadership (i.e. religious institutions), the link between gun deaths and alcohol abuse (i.e. health facilities and taverns), and a common-sense approach to public safety, for example in the case of children in schools.

Several mainstream religious institutions have endorsed the GFZ campaign. In 1996, the Executive Committee of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa passed a resolution that stated: ‘[N]o firearms be brought to worship services and other meetings of our Church, encouraging all our churches to display gun-free zone signs and to inform and educate our people in regard of this policy’ (Methodist Church of Southern Africa, 1996, p. 7, resolution 7). The Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA) went a step further in its 1995 resolution, where it not only called for the abolition of civilian firearms possession, but also declared that all CPSA churches should be designated GFZs (see Annexe 4). Both the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops’ Conference and the Office of the Chief Rabbi encouraged their members to participate in and support the activities of the gun-free campaign, including the GFZ project.

On the one hand, the adoption of these types of resolutions by the country’s mainstream religious bodies demonstrated the high degree of support at an institutional and social level for a more peaceful society. The GFZ was seen as a symbol of that support and commitment. On the other hand, the Zionist Christian Church, the largest indigenous religious body in the country, has been cautious in providing any overt support, largely because it sees the campaign as political.

In the process of creating GFZs, communities have been able to debate issues of public safety and have developed a platform for discussion of gun violence in general. So a campaign that began with a limited focus on one aspect of public safety, namely firearms control, broadened into a discussion on other issues of general public safety, such as street lighting, public policing, and community–police relations. It also became a mobilizing tool for involving people in the public policy process, primarily through the formal submissions process for the Firearms Control Bill. The bill, published in December 1999, was the culmination of years of policy advocacy by civil society and by organizations such as GFSa. The call for stricter firearms regulation started soon after the national firearms amnesty in late 1994. The government responded by establishing a Firearms Policy Committee whose job was to develop a framework to assist government in developing a comprehensive firearms control strategy. The committee developed an initial framework for the legislation. The SAPS then hired an external lawyer and an NGO to draft the bill. The committee was dissolved after it delivered its report to the minister in charge of the bill.<sup>15</sup>

Although the GFZ campaign was not explicit with regard to its potential as a crime-reduction measure, it became clear through the implementation process that, by talking about their experiences and fears of crime and exploring ways in which they could address this, the GFZ campaign gave communities the power and confidence to challenge crime through concrete actions, which in turn contributed to building a safer environment. This is one example of how the flexibility of the campaign enabled participants to shape GFZ implementation according to their specific local needs and contexts. The GFZ campaign was constantly evolving, with new objectives added during the process of consultation and implementation. It also brought people together, building trust and confidence in local initiatives and enhancing existing social networks, all of which are important components of social crime prevention (Moser, 2004; Pelsler, 2002).

### *Enforcement of GFZs*

The GFZ audit conducted in 1999 and 2000 included a survey of more than 700 institutions across the country's nine provinces, looking at the number and type of GFZs. The study focused on the 20 police stations in South Africa

that reported the highest crime incidents. Of those 700 institutions, 61 per cent had declared themselves GFZs. The GFZs selected were not specifically GFSa-initiated, but included those that had implemented a 'no-guns' policy without any intervention from GFSa. Businesses were more likely to be GFZs (120 out of 168) and were also more likely to enforce their GFZ status through security measures such as guards and metal detectors. Government institutions were the least likely to be GFZs, despite the pending new firearms legislation and the government's repeated rhetorical commitment to reducing violent crime.

The authors of the audit reported that there were various ways in which GFZs were implemented, particularly with regard to enforcement. Differences in both process and enforcement were also identified in this study (given the flexibility of the GFSa model, the mechanisms for enforcement inevitably differ). The GFZ audit identified two types of enforcement procedures: those enforced through security measures such as metal detectors (as is the case in many businesses and government facilities); and those based on trust (as is the case in many villages, communities, and neighbourhoods).

#### **Enforcement based on trust**

Enforcement based on trust expects regular users and visitors to respect premises' GFZ status. The GFZ audit reported that many GFZs, especially schools, failed to inform the users of their GFZ status, with few or no mechanisms in place for monitoring or ensuring compliance. This form of GFZ was found to be very common in South Africa and was seen primarily as an attempt by communities to challenge the acceptance of firearms as a norm by declaring their space a GFZ and, in particular, by displaying the gun-free sign. This research confirms this finding.

Buildings such as schools, NGO offices, and churches are less likely to adhere to a security-based enforcement of their gun-free status, for several reasons:

- the fact that the model is based on trust and the expectation that all users will adhere to the GFZ status;
- a lack of resources for installing sophisticated security equipment; and
- the desire of such organizations not to erect barriers between themselves and the communities they serve.

The preferred enforcement strategy among these groups was simply getting people entering the premises to declare their firearms. The least-preferred option was any form of searching, either body or electronic searches. This was partly influenced by cost factors, but primarily by the desire not to erect barriers between the organization and members of the community.

The enforcement of the GFZ based on trust is central to the GFZ campaign, especially at the grass-roots level, as will be seen in the Diepkloof and Fothane case studies below.

### **Enforcement based on security checks**

Companies and banks used more formal mechanisms to enforce GFZs, such as searching visitors, providing safes for the storage of weapons, and prohibiting entry to people carrying firearms. Compliance was thus ensured through enforcement. In these GFZs, one or more of the following procedures were followed. Visitors were:

- asked if they had a firearm to declare; and/or
- asked to place their firearm in a safe; and/or
- subjected to an electronic search; and/or
- subjected to a body search.

### *Other initiatives*

The GFZ project has also spawned many other responses. In instances where local youth groups heard about the project, but had no building to declare a GFZ, they developed innovative and creative ways to respond to the issue of addressing gun violence in their communities. For example, in Tladi, Soweto, the Ekhaya youth group, under the leadership of Kgosana Thekwane, produced a short play showing the dangers of guns, calling on young people to explore alternatives to gun possession and use. This play was then performed in schools in Soweto and at several local and provincial cultural events. A poetry group from Taung in North West Province wrote several poems on the same theme. In schools where the students wanted to go beyond just putting up a GFZ sign at the school's entrance, they developed a school safety pledge, pledging to keep their classrooms gun-free. In 1999, at Mmantutule High School (one of the GFZs in Fothane: see below), the English teacher set an English

comprehension test on GFZs for grade 10 (average age 15) students. All of these initiatives contributed to raising awareness and challenging the idea of gun ownership being normal.

### *Signage*

Contrary to expectations, signage did not play as important a role in informing people about the GFZ status of a building, as was originally thought. The audit found that only 15 per cent of its GFZ sample used GFZ signs. Verbally informing visitors seemed to be the preferred option. Graphic signs communicate a message without words and can be useful, especially in under-resourced communities and institutions and particularly in multilingual communities. Across the three case studies in this research there were a variety of responses to the meaning and efficacy of the gun-free sign. Some interviewees saw the sign as sacrosanct, i.e. having the power to ensure that all those coming into a GFZ would adhere to it. Others regarded it as having little power, comparing it to the lack of compliance with no-smoking signs in South Africa. Signs also help to standardize a message. For some users, especially school students, the sign had little meaning, mainly because they felt that it did not speak their language, both literally (for example, if they spoke isiZulu or seSotho) and figuratively. Many of these students preferred the use of slang in describing their attitude to guns and the gun-free zone idea, wanting to use the slang expression *igun iflop* wording with the no-gun sign, which roughly translates as 'guns suck'.<sup>16</sup>

## **Impact on public policy and violence-reduction initiatives**

### *Public policy*

The GFZ campaign has influenced the development of new policy, such as new firearms regulations, and has enhanced the implementation of existing policy, such as the enforcement of municipal by-laws prohibiting the carrying of weapons into taverns or pubs. It has also had a positive effect on shifting attitudes away from accepting gun possession and use as norms.

The media played an important role in the latter change. Because introducing GFZs was an innovative idea, it received relatively positive and widespread



media coverage. For example, in 1999 the British actress Helen Mirren, in her role as an ambassador for the UK-based charity OXFAM, visited South Africa to campaign against the arms trade. Fothane was one of the communities she visited. Mirren was extensively interviewed on local and national radio, on television, and in the print media. OXFAM made a ten-minute documentary on GFZs in Fothane.

The state also recognized the need to develop an integrated response to crime and violence. In 1996 the government developed the National Crime Prevention Strategy, with an emphasis on social crime prevention and building partnerships between the police and local communities. Within this national framework, several priority crimes were identified, one of which was firearms crime. The minister of safety and security developed a comprehensive firearms control strategy that included establishing a policy committee to review the existing national firearms legislation (the Arms and Ammunition Act of 1969), forging regional links to combat illegal trafficking of firearms (e.g. Operation Rachel with Mozambique), and developing partnerships with other ministries to tackle the problem of gun crime.

Through implementing GFZs, communities were able to engage in the broader debate about guns in South Africa, which included the need for new firearms legislation. In June 2000, several community representatives went to Parliament during the public hearings on the Firearms Control Bill. They spoke with members of the parliamentary Safety and Security Portfolio Committee, which was holding hearings on the proposed new bill. The community representatives lobbied in favour of enacting a bill that would introduce tough measures on gun ownership and gave the committee examples from GFZs of how it was possible to live a gun-free existence.

The end result was the Firearms Control Act, which raised the barrier for citizens' firearms ownership through a number of provisions, such as increasing the age limit on ownership from 16 to 21 years, requiring a competency certificate to demonstrate fitness to possess a gun prior to being able to apply for a firearms licence, and imposing limits on the number of firearms that any one individual can own, including only one handgun for self-defence. The new law also introduced greater administrative controls, such as regular licence renewals and stricter penalties for offences committed under the Act.

An important innovation of the FCA was the provision that certain buildings or categories of buildings be declared Firearm-free Zones (FFZs).<sup>17</sup> This article of the Act (section 140) was included partly as a result of lobbying on the part of GFSA community activists who had experience in the GFZ campaign, although it also arose from the government's desire to restrict the widespread carrying of weapons in public.

Only a few sections of the Act, such as the FFZ provision, were promulgated into law in June 2001, but there were long delays in finalizing the attached regulations, which were only completed in mid-2004. As a result, the complete law did not come into effect until July 2004.

Following enactment of the FCA, the government developed a more focused strategy to combat the proliferation of firearms in South Africa. This included developing and maintaining firearms-related regulations such as the FCA; reducing and eradicating the illegal pool and criminal use of firearms, including the reduction and management of state-owned guns; and developing cooperation between different state sectors such as the police and customs authorities (Meek and Stott, 2004).

### *Violence-reduction initiatives*

The GFZ project was implemented at the grass-roots level through local partnerships and in conjunction with other NGOs and private sector–public sector initiatives to reduce violence, particularly in schools. In the late 1990s, GFSA entered into a strategic partnership with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) to address a range of issues affecting young people, such as violence, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS. The project was launched as a pilot in 40 schools in Soweto, Gauteng Province.

GFSA participated in the project by developing a teaching module on exploring attitudes towards guns, raising awareness about the dangers of guns, and posing alternatives such as the GFZ project. The GFSA–CSVR project was so successful that it was extended, becoming a joint partnership involving the government, NGOs, and the business coalition Business Against Crime. A project known as the We Strengthen Education project, now known as the Tiisa Thuso project, will build on the lessons learned through the pilot and was to be introduced to schools in the Tshwane area in 2005.

Mr Mchunu, the principal of Emndeni Secondary School, one of the schools in the pilot scheme, said that 'the project has been a resounding success. We had serious problems with pupils taking drugs and openly carrying guns and knives to school, but thanks to this programme that has changed' (*Sunday Times*, 2004). The school has become a model institution, with its school-leaving pass rate rising from 20 per cent to 60 per cent. In the Western Cape, GFSA and the Western Cape Education Department worked together to integrate a gun-safety training module into the department's life skills training curriculum. All of these initiatives are unintended consequences of the GFZ campaign. Our case study material illustrates some of the points made above. 📄

## II. GFZs in practice: Presentation of case studies

### Introduction

This section looks at the three case studies of Fothane, Diepkloof, and Khayelitsha and includes background information such as location, population levels, and crime statistics. It also identifies and describes each of the GFZ sites. It is important to emphasize the variety and flexibility in both the establishment and enforcement of these social spaces. The main findings of the research are then discussed in terms of the impact of GFZs on perceptions of crime and security, the demand for guns, and changes in community practice.

In analysing the impact of GFZs, it is important to distinguish among the different levels of change that occur, particularly at the individual, social, and institutional levels. Change at the individual level can be described as altering behaviour, such as no longer carrying a gun, whereas at the social level it can be seen as changes in behaviour within members of a group who choose, for example, to frequent a GFZ bar and comply with the bar's restrictions and thus leave their guns at home. The institutional impact can be expressed in terms of changes in the law. It is important to remember that these are public spaces where robust social interactions often take place. Changes in the quality of these interactions cannot be described in terms of isolated variables or cause-and-effect relations. This paper thus approaches social impact in terms of broad social forces, focusing on the qualitative suggestions of change, such as people feeling more secure, and on the processes that lead to change, instead of trying to isolate particular factors.

### Fothane in Mapela district, Limpopo Province

#### *Background*

Mapela is a poor rural district of approximately 40,000 people located west of the town of Mokopane (formerly Potgietersrust) in Limpopo Province, the

most northern of South Africa's nine provinces. It comprises 20 villages, one of which is Fothane. Mapela is governed both by a tribal authority and by a democratically elected local government councillor (the elected municipal representative). In terms of the tribal authority, each section of the district that is large enough to be a separate village is under the rule of a *letona* (a minor traditional leader) who reports to the head of the tribal authority, currently Chief Nkosinathi Langa, who lives in Fothane. Chief Langa is also a member of the provincial legislature. Like most of the Mapela district, Fothane has dirt roads and little public transport apart from minibus taxis.

### Policing and crime

The Mahwelereng police station serves more than 300,000 people, spread across 37 villages. This area includes the entire Mapela district, as well as several other villages and districts, such as Moshate.<sup>18</sup> The police station, which has 311 employees, is on the outskirts of Mokopane and is 35 km from Fothane. It has a Firearms Unit, and is one of the designated stations for dealing with issues relating to firearms, in particular with the implementation of the new FCA. The murder rate in Mahwelereng precinct has remained low over the last ten years, with an average of 35 to 50 murders a year. The most recent figure of 25 reported murders for the 2003–04 period is the lowest recorded in the last ten years. The most common crimes committed in this area are common assault and assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm (SAPS, 2004).

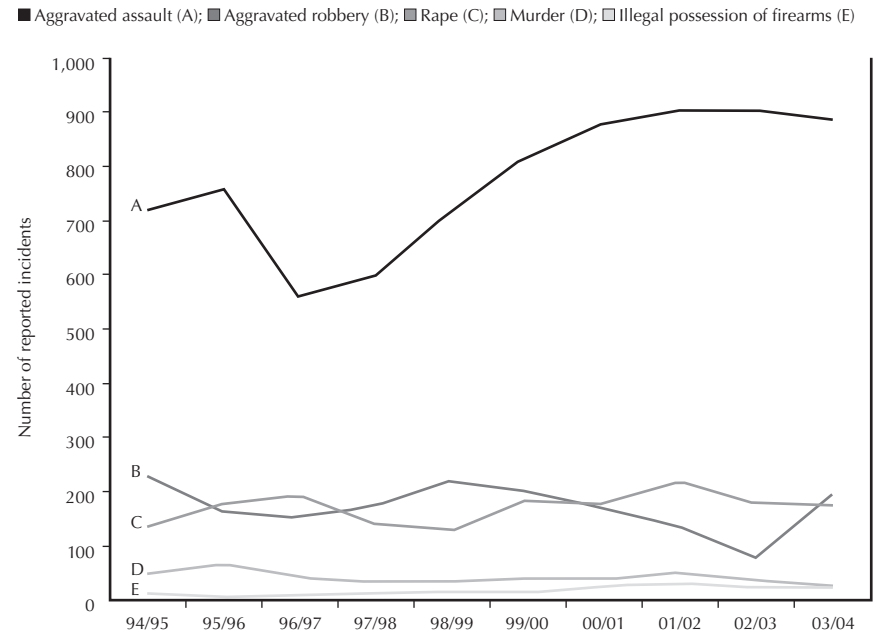
### Gun-free Zones

The following GFZs in Fothane were selected for study: Mapela Clinic, Quick Motel, Mapela Community Centre, and Mmantutule High School. In all of the GFZ sites, GFSA volunteer committee member Samuel Kobela played an important role in introducing the idea of a GFZ and facilitating the process through running workshops and providing materials such as the GFZ toolkit and the GFZ signs. There are 33 GFZs in the Mapela district, the majority of which are schools.

### Mapela Clinic

The clinic is on the main road, on a large fenced property that contains several buildings, most, but not all, of which are used by the clinic. It was declared a

Figure 2  
**Crime trends in Mahwelereng precinct, 1994–2004**



Source: SAPS (2004)

GFZ by the clinic staff in March 1997 and has a GFZ sign clearly displayed on the gate, which is the only entrance to the clinic. It is therefore unlikely that visitors would not notice the sign. The clinic is staffed by 27 nurses, four cleaners, and one security officer (from a private security firm). Sister Onica Sebola, who is in charge of the clinic, started working there in 1996. The clinic is open 24 hours a day and provides a wide range of health-related services. Although the clinic is based in Fothane, it serves all 19 adjacent villages in the Mapela district and also provides a mobile clinic service to the more remote villages. On average, the clinic has approximately 1,500 patients a month. There is no resident medical doctor, but one visits the clinic once or twice a month. This means that the nurses have to carry out some of the tasks that are normally performed by qualified physicians.<sup>19</sup> The nurses refer the more serious medical cases to Mokopane Hospital.

### **Quick Motel**

Quick Motel is a local tavern on the main road linking Fothane, Backenberg, and Mokopane. It was declared a GFZ in March 1997 and a GFZ sign is displayed on the front entrance.

The current owner/manager, George Thage, is the third since it was established, having taken over at the beginning of 2004, which means he was not part of the initial GFZ process. The tavern is staffed by the owner, two male assistants, and two female cleaners. The patrons of Quick Motel range from teenagers to pensioners.

Both men and women frequent the tavern, although females are mostly present on Saturday evenings. Approximately 50 patrons visit the tavern each working day, increasing to more than 200 on weekends, with a further significant increase of up to 1,000 patrons during the last weekend of the month (most workers in South Africa receive their pay on the last Friday of the month). The main attractions at the tavern are a jukebox and a pool table.

### **Mapela Community Centre**

The centre incorporates a small administrative office and the tribal community hall. The centre was declared a GFZ in March 1997. It comprises several buildings, with each building's door displaying a GFZ sign. The centre has three employees: one full-time administrator and two volunteers. The office provides a range of services such as organizing meetings of all community stakeholders for development projects and handling enquiries about local government services. Local councillors whose offices are in Mokopane also use the centre when in Mapela. On average, 40 people a day visit the centre.

### **Mmantutule High School**

The school is in Fothane and, like all the other GFZs in the area, was declared a GFZ in March 1997. The GFZ sign is displayed on the wall at the entrance to the administration centre of the school. The school comprises a single-storey brick structure and several prefabricated buildings arranged around a courtyard. It is one of seven high schools in the Mapela district. It currently has 693 students and employs 23 educators, including the principal and several administrators. In addition, the school employs one security guard.

## **Diepkloof in Soweto, Gauteng Province**

### *Background*

Diepkloof is one of 27 sections that make up Soweto, one of the largest townships in South Africa. Diepkloof, with a population of 160,000, consists of several divisions called Zones. The GFZs reviewed here were mainly in Zones 3 and 4. Zone 2 is regarded as one of the more dangerous areas of Diepkloof, apparently because a higher percentage of young people live there, mostly in informal settlements, than in the other zones.<sup>20</sup>

### *Policing and crime*

Diepkloof police station is situated in Zone 1. It has 253 staff and its remit covers Diepkloof and several other areas in Soweto, such as the shanty town of Motsoeledi. The police station has a specialist Firearms Unit. The 2003–04 SAPS annual report shows a downward trend for murders in the Diepkloof area.<sup>21</sup> There was a pronounced decrease to 85 murders in 1999, down from a high of 169 in 1997. A further decrease was noted in 2003, when 46 murders were reported for the area. As in Mahwelereng, other serious crimes with a high rate of incidence include common assault (989) and assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm (534). Other significant crimes in the area include robbery with aggravating circumstances, burglary at residential premises, and malicious damage to property (see Figure 3).<sup>22</sup>

### *Gun-free Zones*

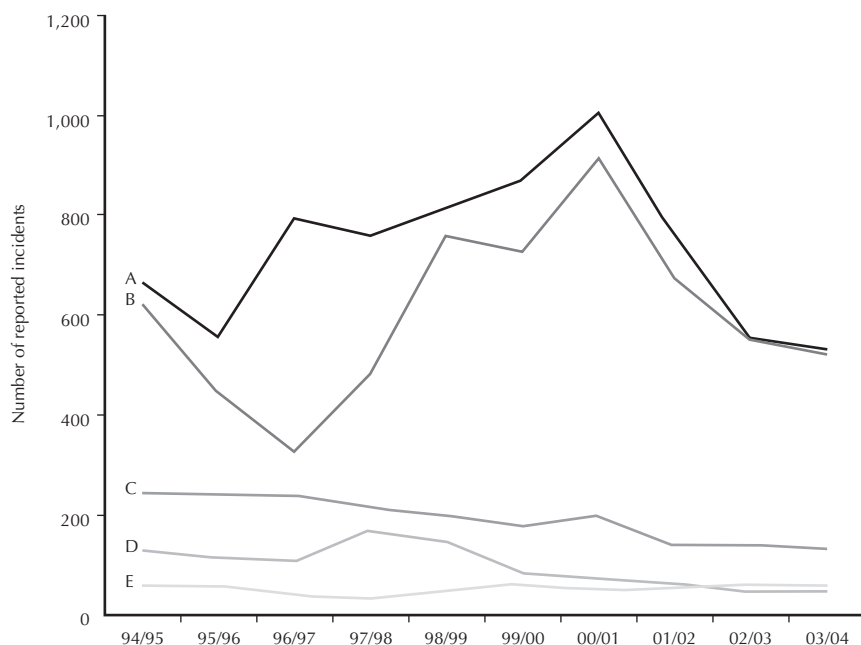
The following GFZs in Diepkloof were selected for study: Diepkloof Poly Clinic, the Kwa-Stadig Tavern, Ekhaya Community Centre, and Namedi High School. In most of the GFZ sites, GFSA volunteer committee members, in particular Thabiso Mollo, played a central role in introducing the idea and facilitating the process through informal discussions and providing materials such as the GFZ signs. There are 21 GFZs in Diepkloof, the majority of which are schools, established between 2001 and 2004.

### **Diepkloof Poly Clinic**

The Diepkloof Poly Clinic in Zone 3 consists of several buildings surrounded by a concrete wall, with a security guard stationed at the entrance to the clinic

Figure 3  
**Crime trends in the Diepkloof area, 1994–2004**

■ Aggravated assault (A); ■ Aggravated robbery (B); ■ Rape (C); ■ Murder (D); ■ Illegal possession of firearms (E)



Source: SAPS (2004)

grounds. There are no GFZ signs at the entrance to the property, but signs are displayed at the entrance to each of the clinic buildings and also inside each building. The clinic provides various health services, including ante-natal and post-natal care, treatment of high blood pressure, diabetes treatment, HIV/AIDS voluntary counselling and treatment, dental care, kidney dialysis, and the treatment of general patients. Because there is no medical doctor at the clinic, victims of stabbings, gunshots, and motor vehicle accidents use either the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital or the Lilian Ngoyi Clinic (formerly the Koos Beukus Clinic). Diepkloof Poly Clinic is headed by Sister E. Mokatsane, and treats approximately 10,000 patients per month.<sup>23</sup> Sixty medical personnel work at the clinic, including a dental surgeon.

Unlike the other three GFZs in Diepkloof, Diepkloof Poly Clinic’s gun-free status is an initiative of the Gauteng Department of Health. About five years ago the dental surgeon’s car was taken from him at gunpoint when he was leaving the clinic and this led to the declaration of the clinic as a GFZ. Sister Mokatsane does not recall meeting a GFSA activist or recall any GFSA involvement in the GFZ project. Furthermore, she does not remember any GFSA GFZ sign, stating that the GFZ sign that bears the Gauteng Regional Health Services logo is the only one she can remember being displayed. The no-gun sign’s wording is in English, isiZulu, and seSotho.

#### Kwa-Stadig Tavern<sup>24</sup>

The Kwa-Stadig Tavern is located in Zone 4 and, like most taverns in Soweto, is part of the house of the owner, Ma Stadig, who also manages it. She declared the tavern a GFZ in 1999 with the assistance of Thabiso Mollo and a local organization, the Diepkloof Youth Initiative. Ma Stadig is assisted by one saleswoman, two female cleaners, and two male drivers. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Kwa-Stadig was the headquarters of the local ‘comrades’ group.<sup>25</sup> According to Ma Stadig and local residents, the comrades used Kwa-Stadig to hold meetings where they discussed how to respond to organized criminal groups that were terrorizing the community. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the tavern’s clientele was drawn from a wide age range, but Kwa-Stadig’s customers are now almost exclusively mature adults.

The tavern has a television (with a satellite feed) and a snooker table. The bar has a designated smoking area and patrons adhere to this strictly, even though there are no signs defining the smoking area. Approximately 40 people visit the tavern on weekends, usually the busiest time of the week for such places.

Patrons are divided mainly according to age: a group of men, aged from their late thirties to early forties, occupies one side of the lounge where its members ‘discuss issues of national interest’. The members of this group regard themselves as politicians and avoid mixing with older patrons. There are more male than female patrons. It is estimated that females account for only about two per cent of all visitors to the bar. The tavern is open from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. every day of the week.

### **Ekhaya Community Centre**

The Ekhaya Community Centre is in Zone 4 and was declared a GFZ in 1999. Jonas Thage has managed the centre since 1986. The centre is open between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. It is used by a variety of people for a number of activities: a women's self-help sewing project, dance lessons, beauty pageants and drama rehearsals, and aerobics and weightlifting. A small shoe repair business operates just outside the entrance. All these activities take place from Monday to Friday. There is a hall for hire during weekends that caters for people who require a small venue for wedding functions, funeral services (especially night vigils), academic graduation ceremonies, and church services. The hall accommodates approximately 400 people.

### **Namedi High School**

The school, in Diepkloof Zone 3, was declared a GFZ in 1999 by the school body, which includes the students. Although it is designed to accommodate a maximum of 1,200 pupils, the school currently has more than 1,300 students because of the shortage of schools in the area. At the time of the study, the school employed 30 teachers and two security officers. In 2002, Namedi High School achieved a 65 per cent grade 12 (average age 18) pass rate. In 2003, the pass rate increased to 81 per cent.

The school has a history of gun violence. In the 1980s and 1990s, according to locals and former students, gun violence involving students took place both inside and outside the school premises. Gun violence that occurred outside the school premises over the weekend would normally spill over into the school, as those who were attacked often came into the school to seek revenge, which led to further arming and firearms use on school property. Guns were stored on the school premises without the knowledge of the principal or teachers and were under the control of the comrades. Student involvement in gun violence continues: in August 2004 a male student from the school was shot dead at a party over one weekend.

These incidents of gun violence disrupt the normal functioning of the school in two ways: firstly, police officers come to the school to question those involved; and secondly, revenge attacks often take place on the school premises.<sup>26</sup>

## **Khayelitsha<sup>27</sup> in Cape Town Metropole, Western Cape Province**

### *Background*

Khayelitsha is a township in the Cape Town metropolitan area, approximately 20 km from the centre of Cape Town. The community is high-density urban sprawl comprising mostly informal housing and is made up of several numbered areas, called Sites, some of which are also referred to locally by other names such as Harare or Thembani.<sup>28</sup> Khayelitsha is one of the largest and most violent townships in South Africa. The local police station reports more murders than any other in the country. The 2001 census recorded a population of 250,000, but most local informants estimate the current population to be around 800,000 people. This large discrepancy highlights the difficulty of obtaining reliable data from a society in transition.

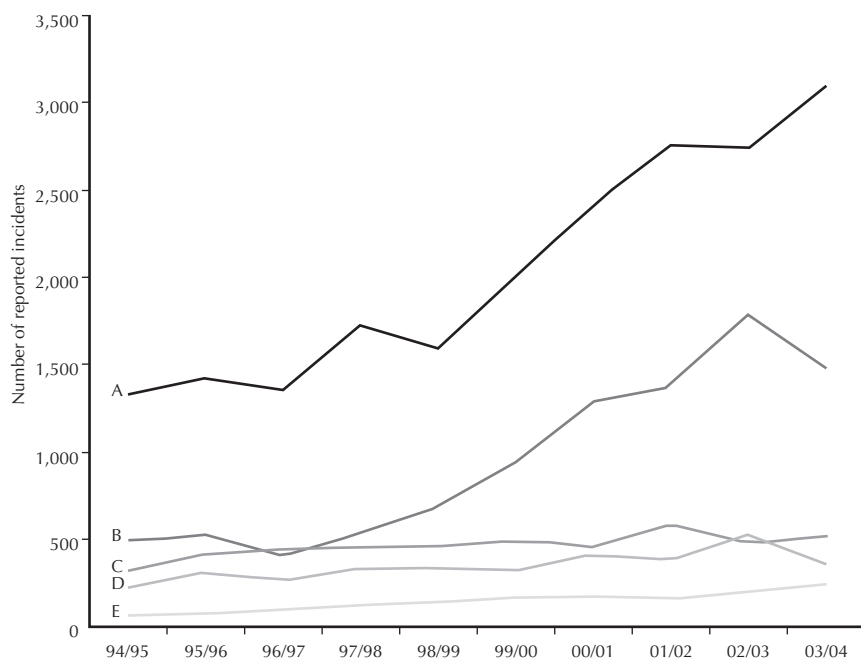
### *Policing and crime<sup>29</sup>*

Until July 2004 there was only one police station, located in Site C, serving the entire area, with a satellite station located in the Harare Site. In July 2004 the satellite station was converted into a fully fledged police station and an additional station was opened in Site B. More than 600 people (including administrators) are employed among the three police stations. These three stations handled almost 17,000 reported crimes in 2003, ranging from murder to shoplifting. Although the annual number of murders dropped significantly—from 528 in 2002 (the highest recorded over the last ten years) to 358 in 2003—the township is still regarded as South Africa's murder hot spot. The number of reported rapes increased from 478 in 2002 to 517 in 2003. This differs from the downward trend of reported rape cases in the rest of the province, a trend thought to be related to the opening of ten new family violence, child protection, and sexual offences units in 2004.

Other crimes that remain at high levels and that have increased since 2004 include assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm (3,089), common assault (2,020), and burglary at residential premises (1,621) (see Figure 4). Crime analysts say that population density is the major reason for the high crime levels in the area. Irvin Kinnes, an independent analyst, said, 'people are living too close to each other with very little infrastructure. It is the way the com-

Figure 4  
**Crime trends in the Khayelitsha area, 1994–2004**

■ Aggravated assault (A); ■ Aggravated robbery (B); ■ Rape (C); ■ Murder (D); ■ Illegal possession of firearms (E)



Source: SAPS (2004)

munity is built, the informal nature of it and the lack of roads, inadequate lighting and lack of recreational facilities for the community' (*Sunday Times*, 2004).

### Gun-free Zones

The following GFZs in Khayelitsha were selected for study: Site B Day Hospital, Pat's Tavern, Site B Public Library, and Zola Secondary School. There are 44 GFSA-initiated GFZs in the Western Cape, of which 20 are in Khayelitsha. The community halls in Khayelitsha were initially included in this study, but were then excluded because of a lack of sufficient information on their GFZ status.<sup>30</sup> Only two of the sites examined were GFSA initiatives. The others

were set up either through the owners' initiative or that of the local council or provincial government. It was unclear at all of the Khayelitsha GFZs as to when they had been declared, who had taken the initiative in doing so, and who was responsible for enforcing or maintaining this status.

A distinguishing feature of some of the GFZs in Khayelitsha was the involvement of the Cape Town City Council, which used existing by-laws and provincial ordinances to help implement and enforce the GFZs, notably the province's Control to Public Premises and Vehicles Act 1985 (see Annexe 5). Another distinguishing feature of the area was the authorities' combining of alcoholic beverage and firearms control. This was demonstrated by the code of conduct for licensed tavern owners and in the structure of the provincial police, where the firearms and liquor control units had been combined. This is significant, given the clear links between alcohol abuse and gunshot deaths and injuries.<sup>31</sup> The Cape Town City Council has shown a commitment to the GFZ concept by exploring a variety of ways in which to implement GFZs and FFZs, in part under pressure from GFSA's Western Cape office. These laws exist in other provinces, but appear not to have been used by the local authorities in support of the GFZ movement.

### Site B Day Hospital

The hospital is a 'weapon free' zone by official notice (Section 2 [1] [b] of the Control to Public Premises and Vehicles Act of 1985), as indicated on a notice board at the entrance to the hospital. The notice does not include the pictorial gun-free sign. The perimeter of the hospital is walled and fenced, with at least two security officers stationed at the main (and only) entrance. The hospital is a primary health care unit.

### Pat's Tavern

Located in Site B, the tavern was declared a GFZ by its owner, Pat. Although he supports the GFZ idea, prohibiting the carrying of weapons in taverns is one of the conditions for getting a liquor licence from the city council. Unlike *shebeens*, licensed liquor taverns have to adhere to certain rules, which include age restrictions, trading hours, and weapons prohibition.<sup>32</sup> There is no official GFZ sign in the tavern, but a hand drawn gun-free sign is located above the counter.

Pat's Tavern is located on the ground floor of a two-storey brick house. The bar covers an area of about 70 sq. m, secured by means of a wall and two steel gates. There are four entrances to the tavern, which is usually closed between Monday and Friday, during which time all four entrances remain locked. Two young men (relatives of the owner) usually keep watch over the house during the week. At the weekends, Pat's employs a woman bar tender and two male bouncers. The tavern has a pool table, a public telephone, a jukebox, and two television sets. It can hold approximately 60 people and is usually full on weekends.

#### **Site B Public Library**

The library is a large brick structure, comprising three sections covering an area of approximately 100 sq. m. One area consists of the library proper: books, reading areas, and the loan desk; another area is set aside for workshops and meetings; and the third zone is a designated study area. The library complex is gated and surrounded by a fence. The library shares its premises with a national HIV/AIDS prevention programme (Love Life) aimed at young people, and with the Site's home affairs and social development community offices. The library employs one female staff member who issues books, and a male caretaker. High-school students are the main users of the library: there are usually about 20 students in the building at any one time. This number increases during periods of exams and decreases over the school holidays.

#### **Zola Secondary School**

Located in a section called Thembani, Zola Secondary School is a medium-sized two-storey brick building. The school differs from many township schools in that it is surrounded by a grass field, and has brick paving from the street to the front entrance, a secure perimeter fence, and an outer gate. There is also a steel gate at the main door of the school building, providing access to the school's reception area and administration offices. It employs 36 teachers and has 1,445 students from grades 8 to 12 (ages 13 to 18 or more). A large metal sign on the front-facing wall of the school building reads: 'This is a gun and drug abuse free school.' There is also a prominent gun-free graphic at the bottom of the sign. 🗿

### **III. Appraising GFZs at the local level: Key findings**

This section draws on data from the three case studies. The central finding is that GFZs are an effective community building mechanism. They enable people to engage actively in building safer communities. However, the success or otherwise of GFZs depends to a large extent on local conditions and the social processes involved.

#### **Types of GFZs implemented**

There are three types of GFZs operating in the three areas discussed in the case studies, which are similar to those identified in the GFZ audit. These are individualist, statist, and initiated by GFSA.

##### *GFSA-initiated GFZs*

The most common and widely used GFZs are the GFZs initiated by GFSA, in the sense that GFSA personnel organized the process. These are based on trust, using the nationwide right to admission law if required. They are characterized by use of signs displaying the gun-free symbol, with the wording: 'This is a gun-free zone.' Some of the GFZ sites have two additional signs, one that explains the rules of a GFZ and what it is<sup>33</sup> and another that reads 'Leave your Fear at the Door'.

##### *Individualist*

The second class of GFZ are those initiated by business owners who put up their own notices informing visitors of their premises' GFZ status. They generally employ security guards or bouncers to enforce and monitor the GFZ. This type of GFZ can be seen at big corporations such as BP and in smaller township business premises such as some of the taverns in Khayelitsha.



## Statist

The third type of GFZ covers gun-free sites that have been set up by the local council or provincial government and that are subject either to municipal by-laws or other ordinances and employ a variety of enforcement mechanisms. This appears to be well utilized in the Western Cape. For example, Section 2(1) (b) of the Control to Public Premises and Vehicles Act of 1985 has been used to enforce GFZs in many Western Cape buildings such as hospitals and schools, as in the case of the Site B Day Hospital. There are no gun-free signs in these buildings; instead, official written notices inform people that weapons are not allowed on the premises.

In addition, security guards located at the entrances to such buildings perform random searches on visitors. Zola Secondary School has been declared a GFZ as part of the Safe Schools Project in the Western Cape. But the school does not enforce the rule through searches or the use of a metal detector.

Other examples of this form of GFZ include the legal taverns licensed by city councils to sell and serve alcoholic drinks to the public. Part of the licensing agreement includes a code of conduct that prohibits the carrying of weapons on the premises. The owner can choose to search individuals or provide a safe for the storage of guns. It is clear from our observations that not all legal taverns follow this procedure.

## Facilitators

All the GFZ sites in Fothane were initiated by a GFSA activist, Sam Kobela, who lives in the community, is active in several community issues, and is widely regarded as a resource for the community. Kobela was not necessarily a member or in any way part of the institutions declared GFZs. Although Thabiso Mollo, the GFSA activist in Diepkloof, did not initiate all the GFZs discussed in this study, he shared many attributes with Kobela. In both cases these individuals played a central role in facilitating the GFZ process in their respective communities. This involved calling community meetings, mobilizing volunteers to assist with the campaign, distributing GFZ materials, and making follow-up visits.

Although these two activists used similar tools to tell people about the GFZ campaign—primarily meetings and pamphlets—they had different approaches and employed different strategies, depending on their individual personalities, local contacts, resources, and personal standing in the community. They had different ways of getting people involved, such as using established social networks, holding large community meetings, holding one-on-one meetings, and forging new networks. For example, Kobela was able to organize a large stakeholder meeting to discuss the GFZ idea because he was very well known and respected in his village. Given the cohesive nature of the village, it was also possible to get buy-in to the GFZ initiative through one large community meeting. But Mollo, who was also well respected in his immediate community of Zone 4 in Diepkloof, found that a more effective strategy was to go door to door, building relationships with individuals in institutions, rather than holding a broad stakeholder meeting. This decision was also influenced by the large size and diverse nature of the Diepkloof community. Despite the fact that they used different methods, the two men's insider status and the respect in which they were held enabled both of these activists to mobilize community interest in and support for the GFZs.

The Khayelitsha case study differs from the other two studies on two counts: there was much less of a consistent GFSA presence (as expressed through one particular individual); and only two of the GFZs there were initiated by GFSA, with the others being set up through the local council or the provincial government.

## Reasons for becoming a GFZ

In the majority of the GFZs cited in the three case studies examined here there was no single reason or initiating event—such as a gun death or a shooting on a given premises—that led to the declaration of a GFZ. Namedi High School, which had a history of gun violence, was one exception. Thabiso Mollo, a former student of the school and the main initiator of the GFZ there, said:

*At this time [1980s] 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. 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 [gun violence]. I got a pamphlet from someone about how to make your school a gun-free zone. I phoned the GFSa office and I went with some other students to a GFSa 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.*

For Mollo, getting rid of guns was an important part of his vision for a new South Africa. In explaining why he was keen for Namedi High School to become a GFZ, he recalled his own past involvement in gun violence and explained that, given the new context, it was no longer appropriate to use guns:

*Yes, we used to keep guns on the school premises, but that should be contextualised. I made sure that before I left I declared the school a Gun-free Zone. The message I was putting across was that we no longer needed guns. We have gone beyond that stage.*

Namedi High School students saw the GFZ project as one attempt to try to deal with the problem of guns in their school. It was also one of the sites in which the building's users were more involved in the GFZ declaration process than its owners. This may have been because of Mollo's close links to the school and his (related) ease in talking to the students there. The school's principal felt that the reasons why Mollo wanted the school to become a GFZ was to challenge the gun culture at the school and to signal a decisive break with the apartheid past.

In Khayelitsha, the most common reason for establishing GFZs was fear of crime. The Safe Schools Project was initiated by the Western Cape Department of Education to fight crime in township schools. Declaring Zola Secondary School both a GFZ and a drug-free zone was part of that initiative. Similarly, setting up GFZs in council buildings was part of government's wider efforts to fight crime.

Although reducing crime seems to have been the main reason why public spaces in Khayelitsha were made GFZs, Pat, the tavern owner, had another

reason. Although he was required by law to prohibit weapons, he wanted his tavern to be a weapons-free zone because it contributed to making the tavern 'an entertainment place where people come to enjoy themselves and relax'. Although Pat agreed that crime is not good for business, his main reason for declaring his bar a GFZ was 'entertainment without disturbance'. In his opinion, that also involved the way customers behaved and dressed and not allowing any bad behaviour, which included carrying guns.

In Fothane, the main reason people declared buildings GFZs was to demonstrate their commitment to the vision of a gun-free South Africa and because they were of the opinion that guns were dangerous and should not be displayed publicly.

## Participatory vs. top-down processes

According to the GFSa model, the process of establishing a GFZ is critical in ensuring its compliance and sustainability. The process used to declare public buildings GFZs was explored in all of the three case studies in order to determine the extent to which a participatory approach had been used, whether other methods had been used, and if so, what their impact was.

### *Participatory approach*

In most instances, the GFZs initiated by GFSa were participatory. This involved a process of consultation with key stakeholders, getting local buy-in, sharing information, and handing out GFZ signs. GFSa also recruited and involved volunteers in disseminating the information, creating GFZs, and monitoring them. When working with local communities on the GFZ campaign, GFSa activists involved them in the debates about guns and GFZs, and in so doing educated and involved members of the community in the GFZ process.

Details of the GFZ implementation process differed across the three case studies, depending on several factors, including the initiator, the year in which the GFZ was declared, and the resources available. For example, in Fothane, all the building owners and managers, and all the interviewees who had some knowledge of the history of GFZs, noted that the GFZ implementation process had started with a very broad and inclusive meeting, attended by all

relevant stakeholders, held at the tribal hall. Attendees included men and women, young and old. Most of them were there as representatives of local organizations or institutions such as political parties, the tribal authority, community-based organizations, youth groups, churches, and local councillors.<sup>34</sup> In addition, police officers from Mahwelereng police station were present. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the idea of declaring public institutions GFZs, with the aim of preventing the carrying of guns in all such places. Interviewees noted that those present at the meeting unanimously bought into the idea of GFZs. Fothane was one of the first sites in which the GFZ project was initiated and therefore a very thorough process of consultation and inclusion was followed. This is one of the reasons for its continuing success.

The Mapela Clinic was one example of stakeholders being included in the process in the initial stages of declaration, but again demonstrated the importance of ongoing communication about the GFZ status. As one informant noted:

*Gun-free South Africa introduced the concept of GFZs and supplied documents, which gave some important information about the concept of Gun-free Zones. The information sparked interest in the idea. Mapela Clinic staff and I held a meeting with the Department of Health's community liaison officer and the regional director of health to inform them about our intention to declare the clinic a Gun-free Zone. Later, GFSA people organized a video show which emphasized the danger of guns in workplaces. Then there was a public launch, which was supported by the local councillor, the youth, and the South African Police Services.<sup>35</sup>*

In Fothane, the owners and managers of institutions and premises that were declared GFZs recalled that once the GFZ idea was accepted by those present at the stakeholder meeting, no effort was made to involve users in the actual process of establishing GFZs and no mechanisms were put in place to continue informing people about the GFZ policy. The informants considered that such a process was especially important at GFZ sites such as schools, where there is a new student intake every year. This pattern is common at all such sites across all three cases studies.

The inclusion of users of GFZs was often ad hoc and spontaneous. One of the patrons at the Quick Motel Tavern recalled attending a social club meeting

when the first owner of the tavern drew everyone's attention to the GFZ sign, while requesting them to support his efforts and asking all those present to sell the idea to other patrons. Similarly, many of the focus group participants who had been using Mapela Clinic long before it was declared a GFZ reported that they were not informed about, or involved in the process of, declaring it a GFZ. They just arrived one morning to find a GFZ sign at the clinic's gate.

The lack of users' involvement was also noted at the Mapela Community Centre and at the Quick Motel. An ongoing process of information sharing about a given GFZ is critical to maintain its meaning and impact. This is particularly true for institutions such as schools. For example, grade 11 (average age 16) students from Mantutule High School arrived at the school in 2001, when it was already a GFZ, and thus could not comment on the process. Similarly, pupils who participated in the process in Diepkloof have since left the school and the new students were not formally introduced to the GFZ idea. A focus group held with grade 11 students showed that no one had ever discussed the gun-free status of the school with them. A male teacher who joined the school in 2003 also confirmed that since he had arrived at the school there had not been any formal discussion of the school's gun-free status among his colleagues.

The participatory model used in Diepkloof differed from that of Fothane. Diepkloof is not as cohesive a community as Fothane village, where it is easy to call a meeting of all stakeholders. The GFSA activist in Diepkloof thus took advantage of his involvement in various local organizations to mobilize support for the GFZ idea. For example, for schools he approached the national School Governing Body Council, he targeted taverns through the local liquor traders' association, and he approached individual managers of community centres.

Although GFSA had a clearly defined process for declaring GFZs, activists did not always follow this on the ground, as described earlier. According to Joseph Dube, a former national organizer at GFSA and the main driving force behind the GFZ campaign,<sup>36</sup> several factors such as lack of resources (both financial and human), inadequate training, poor working relationships with volunteers, and insufficient materials made it difficult to implement the GFZ project in a standardized manner across all sites. Nevertheless, GFSA also

recognized that, in the absence of a more uniform and standardized process, communities had the flexibility to engage with the project within their own context and constraints, and this was seen as a strength. So, although the process aimed to be as inclusive and participatory as possible, this was not always the case.

As a result of the GFZ campaign, many people expressed an interest in becoming members of GFSAs. They wanted to be active on the issue of gun control, and not just in their own communities. They also wanted contact with other communities that had had similar experiences. One of the tools used to connect people has been the GFSAs' quarterly newsletter, which provides news about and updates on GFSAs branches and their projects, one of which is the GFZ project. This was still not enough for many people, who wanted a visible expression of their membership and requested GFSAs membership cards, which could also act as identity cards. The cards required a signature committing their holders to the vision and mission of the organization. Many people have used these cards when working in their communities on a range of GFSAs projects. Most activists interviewed across all three case studies identified themselves as GFSAs members.

### *Top-down approach*

Some of the GFZ sites in this sample were not participatory, but followed a top-down approach. Such top-down cases were most common among small businesses and at government buildings. This is similar to the findings of the GFZ audit.

The top-down approach has two forms, *individualist* and *statist*. The first is where the owner decides to make his or her premises a GFZ and does so without any consultation with the building's users. This may be motivated by support for the concept or a need to comply with municipal by-laws, or both. Customers are not informed of the new GFZ status until it has been declared by the owner and are then typically searched for weapons when they enter the premises. Users are thus not involved in any way in the process of declaring the space a GFZ.

The statist approach is where government, at the provincial or at the local level, declares a public building a GFZ. Typically, GFZ rules and signs are

suddenly placed in or on the building(s) and the community has no idea of who did this or why, and what it means. After a while people come to know that when they visit these areas they are searched for weapons. Government policy on firearms, as expressed in the FCA, says nothing about community involvement in declaring council premises FFZs. Although the FFZs, just as in the GFZs, may be initiated by the community, FFZs are prescribed within the new firearms law and, therefore, transgressing the FFZ is a criminal offence. At Zola Secondary School, the students said that they were not involved in the process of discussing or putting up the gun-free sign. One student commented: 'We only saw it [the sign] after it was put up and we had no [prior] knowledge about it.'

### **Limitations in the process**

Based on the three case studies, several limitations in the current GFZ process were identified. The first was the uneven process of training volunteers to implement the GFZs. This was particularly evident in the Western Cape, where the local GFSAs fieldworker acknowledged that most of the people he worked with were still in school and could not dedicate much time to GFZ implementation. Others were unemployed youths who had less time for GFSAs and the project when they got jobs. In Fothane, much more time and effort was put into training key facilitators in the community to continue the work without the direct input of a GFSAs employee than was the case in the Western Cape.

Generally, some ongoing input and contact is still needed after implementation. Without it, the community's commitment to the project is thin and its involvement sporadic.

A second limitation was an exclusive initiating process, approaching only one or two people at a potential GFZ site without including all of its staff and users. This resulted in only a few people at a GFZ site knowing about and supporting the GFZ status of the building, potentially only benefiting those who had participated in the initiating process. In the case of public spaces such as community halls, the majority of interviewees felt that the GFZ project leaders should have held an initial workshop in the hall. In this way, people

would have come with the GFSA activists and facilitators to be educated about the signs, with the hope that they would have then told other people about them. This was also sometimes seen in cases where fieldworkers approached each institution separately, rather than addressing a group of institutions together. For example, the Western Cape researcher was of the opinion that it would have been a good idea for GFSA workers to visit all of the people in charge of libraries in Khayelitsha rather than just visiting some libraries. This would have allowed all parties concerned to have a full exchange of ideas and utilize all available resources regarding the best way to establish and monitor the GFZ initiative in that area.

Generally, people at the grass-roots level may have the will and commitment to start a GFZ project, but the people at the top have the organizational resources. There was some evidence in our study to suggest that even when people were not informed about a building's new GFZ status, they welcomed it and acknowledged that they felt safer in it.<sup>37</sup>

This potential goodwill was undermined by the lack of communication about the meaning of the GFZ and the lack of enforcement, leaving some users feeling more insecure.<sup>38</sup>

Another limitation, both within GFSA and local communities, has been the lack of resources and the overdependence on volunteers. The GFZ campaign was wholly funded by GFSA. This meant that the lack of funding directly impacted on the production of new signs and other GFZ materials, such as pamphlets.

In addition, being dependent primarily on a volunteer support base meant that people were not always available to assist or that when they got formal employment their participation was drastically reduced. This required frequently having to find new volunteers, which took time and could result in a loss of group experience and expertise.

Finally, one of the weaknesses in almost all GFZ sites was the lack of follow-up with existing GFZs and keeping new users informed of the GFZ status, either through ongoing distribution of materials, display of a policy, or regular workshops. Generally, as the initiator of the GFZ project, GFSA has an important role to play in sustaining the GFZs and in providing new materials on an ongoing basis.

## Enforcement policies

GFZs are enforced in various ways. At one extreme, enforcement is based on trust, with little or no security-related enforcement mechanisms in place. People are expected to respect the gun-free status of a building or institution, even, in some instances, when they have not formally been notified of that status. In these instances, the gun-free sign is seen by the owners and those in charge of premises as being sufficient to convey the message and to ensure compliance. Although this research did not look at GFZ churches, Vienings and Taylor (2000) cite places of worship as one of the GFZ types enforced through trust. They report that gun carrying worshippers are welcomed, although they are made aware that their guns are not. A GFZ enforced by trust is a place where

*an organization trusts that people will respect the gun-free status as there are no mechanisms in place to enforce it. They are common in South Africa as organizations attempt to challenge the acceptance of firearms as the norm by declaring their premises gun-free, while trusting that gun carriers will comply. (Vienings and Taylor, 2000, p. 6)*

This method of enforcement was evident in most of the GFZ spaces reviewed in this study.

The other extreme of enforcement involves formal mechanisms. These include electronic searches of visitors and the provision of safes or strong boxes for storing guns, notably in banks and government buildings. Compliance is thus ensured through enforcement. This was most often seen in provincial or local government buildings, such as the clinics in Khayelitsha and Diepkloof.

In the GFZ audit, the lack of resources to enforce GFZs was one of the reasons cited for the lack of more formal enforcement mechanisms, especially in public institutions: 'very often learning institutions do not have the necessary resources to implement their gun-free policies—they cannot afford gates, security guards or electronic search systems. In such cases it is not feasible to expect enforcement' (Vienings and Taylor, 2000, p. 7).

This experience and view were also present primarily in the GFSA-initiated GFZs across all three case studies. The lack of resources and the absence of a clear and comprehensive policy typically meant that managers and staff

members of GFZs had to improvise in terms of enforcement. Consequently, each GFZ manager adopted a unique and convenient method of enforcement. Patrons of the Quick Motel Tavern said that since there was no policy to enforce a GFZ and no safe in which to keep guns, they did not bother a person entering the bar carrying a gun unless he or she started to cause trouble. George Thage, Quick Motel's owner, said that given the lack of a security officer, he took the initiative, politely approaching gun carriers and requesting them to leave the premises. At the Mapela Community Centre the administrator also said that he had to tell people not to bring their guns into the GFZ.

The majority of the GFZs in all three case studies were enforced by trust. Although the gun-free status of all of these GFZs was conveyed by signs, there was no uniform system in place to enforce this status. All the managers and owners of the GFZs in this sample said they believed in the efficacy of GFZs, but felt constrained by the lack of resources with which to enforce the gun-free status of their institutions in any practical way.

Despite these concerns, all the GFZs in Fothane were effectively enforced through adherence to a new social norm of no public carrying or display of guns. This had ensured compliance with the GFZ status of buildings in the community. Interviews and focus group discussions confirmed the existence of this new social norm. People were trusted to comply in all of the Fothane GFZs. The people of Fothane demonstrated their commitment to the GFZ idea through ongoing compliance with the GFZ signs. Although their objection was to the public display of guns, and to the danger that guns posed, they were not against gun ownership per se. Most of those interviewed expressed the view that gun ownership was acceptable as long as the guns' owners were responsible. This view was also based on the understanding that guns are primarily bought for purposes of self-defence and the defence of family and property. Although firearms law in South Africa allows for the public carrying of firearms, those interviewed in Fothane defined 'responsible gun ownership' as including no public carrying of firearms and keeping guns stored in a safe at all times.

In all of the GFZs examined in Diepkloof, the social process of teaching people, through GFZs, that guns were socially unacceptable was more important than the formal mechanisms of enforcement, and enforcement was based

on trusting people to comply with the gun-free status of an institution. The study found that the manager of each GFZ had different reasons for trusting consumers to comply. At the Kwa-Stadig Tavern, formal enforcement was not regarded as an issue because of the nature of the clientele. There was an assumption that guns in the community were associated with unemployed youths, and that because these people were not allowed in the bar there was no need to enforce its gun-free status. It is important to note that both the bar's owner and its patrons agreed that formal enforcement was unnecessary. They said this was because the tavern's clientele was socially homogenous, consisting almost exclusively of people from Zone 4 who interacted with each other on a regular basis, generating trust and familiarity. As patrons noted:

*We do not see a need for such a policy [to enforce the gun-free status of the tavern] because we know each other very well. We are all from the neighbourhood. We thus do not expect anyone to be irresponsible enough to bring a gun [authors' emphasis].*

*No one has ever brought a gun to this tavern ever since it was declared a Gun-free Zone. We never have quarrels or fights. Enforcement is not a problem since we are all adults and thus behave responsibly, treating each other with respect.*

*There is no need to install a safe to keep customers' guns. We come here to enjoy ourselves; people must leave their guns at home. No guns should be allowed here.<sup>39</sup>*

Even if her patrons felt differently, the bar's owner, Ma Stadig, said she would not be prepared to install a safe on her premises because she was strongly opposed to guns: 'I will not even consider installing a safe to store a gun for any of my customers; I hate a gun with all my heart.'

The manager of the Ekhaya Centre, Jonas Thage, also trusted users of the centre to comply with its gun-free status, but more importantly, he said enforcement was not necessary because he thought the chances of a criminal attack were almost non-existent:

*There are reasons why we feel very secure here. First, there are no computers on the premises. We also do not keep any money here—all people who hire the hall for weekend functions have to pay at the municipal office and bring a receipt to us. The kind of functions we host here do not allow for the carrying of guns.*

Thage's trust was not unfounded. One of the regular weightlifters at the centre, who had a job as a security officer, once took his gun to the centre because he had gone there directly from work. Without being asked by anyone, he declared his gun, which the manager kept safe for him until he left.<sup>40</sup> Although Thage was relying on trust to enforce the gun-free status of the centre, the men who used the centre for weightlifting proposed a number of ways in which the GFZ could be enforced. Despite agreeing on the need for formal mechanisms, they disagreed on the form these should take. Some wanted to install a safe, whereas others felt that the most effective form of enforcement was to discourage people from carrying guns. One user said, 'If you bring a gun you must be turned away.'

Across all three case studies it is clear that compliance with a newly created norm, i.e. not bringing a gun into a GFZ, is an effective and powerful mechanism for enforcing GFZs. In some instances, for example in Fothane, it appeared that the norm of not bringing a firearm into a GFZ had expanded to include a restraint on all public carrying and display of firearms. As can be seen in the cases of Fothane and the Kwa-Stadig Tavern in Diepkloof, this form of enforcement also requires high levels of social cohesion and a strong sense of solidarity.

The way in which social sanctions work differed across communities. For example, in Fothane, because of the high levels of trust among users of GFZs, removing a gun carrier from a GFZ was not necessarily the first course of action. There was only one incident in which one of the researchers was in a GFZ when someone entered with a gun. He recalled what happened:

*There was a young man in his early twenties playing pool with a gun visible on his waist. An informal discussion with the owner of Quick Motel revealed that he had never seen the man before and he doubted if the man was a resident of Fothane. He enquired from other patrons and they confirmed that he was from a neighbouring Section. Patrons went on with their drinking without being bothered by the presence of a gun carrier. This confirmed the statement by participants in a focus group discussion who stated that they would never bother a gun carrier until he starts causing trouble.<sup>41</sup>*

The approach of this group was to inform the gun owner that next time he should leave his gun at home, rather than evict him from the bar.

## Impact of GFZs on security: Feelings of safety and community perceptions

### *Perceptions of crime and police*

Most interviewees across all three case studies reported that the most common crimes committed in their communities were mugging, armed robbery, and house break-ins. Despite the high national rape figures, interviewees on the whole did not identify this as one of the most common crimes, except for some informants in Fothane. Rape is well known for being under-reported, both to officials and to researchers. Violence against women was acknowledged as occurring in these communities, but, when questioned further, participants did not perceive violence against women as a problematic or common issue, often seeing it as a private, domestic matter. In some instances this was seen as normal by interviewees who understood rape simply to be a 'man beating his woman'. In a context in which traditional values and practices are more intact, such as in Mapela district, violence against women is mostly dealt with through mediation and conciliation by the elders and the tribal authority, rather than being reported to the police. Community development workers also noted that another crime not yet recognized as such by most members of the community was statutory rape. They attributed the rise of statutory rape to young girls having sex with older men for money.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that most interviewees regarded violence against women as a domestic matter, occurring within the private domain of the family, reinforces the general notion of violence as an acceptable social norm. In this research, it also helps us to understand the particular perceived relationship between men and guns, which is one of power and masculine identity.

Young men and boys were widely identified by interviewees as being the people most frequently engaged in crime and in carrying guns. Most interviewees thought that the guns used to commit crimes were illegal and that boys as young as 16 carried guns. Participants agreed that carrying a gun gives you the power to make your victims do whatever you want them to do.

In general, participants' perceptions of the police were extremely negative. Participants regarded police officers as being corrupt, inefficient, and involved in crime. In some instances they blamed the police for smuggling illegal guns into the community. As one of the Zola Secondary School students put it: 'You

see, guns are distributed too much in South Africa. People who distribute guns are police and soldiers. If your father is a soldier or [a] police [officer] you are likely to own a gun.'

Although questions in the focus groups were not specifically directed to the role of the police in crime prevention, strong generalized feelings were expressed about the police force's perceived inability to protect the public. This was attributed either to police officers' fear of being victims of violence or because police officers were friends with criminals. One of the most common complaints was that the police never responded to a call that involved a shooting. Instead, participants said, the police typically arrived too late, when they thought that the 'heat has ceased'. This was exacerbated by the considerable distance between police stations and the communities they serve, the large number of people each police station was required to serve, and the perceived lack of resources and skills in the SAPS.<sup>43</sup> This was true for all three case studies.

### *Impact on security*

The sound of gunshots was one of the most common indicators of people's feelings of insecurity. One of the pupils at Zola Secondary School said, 'In this area [Thembani], no day goes by without gunshots. There is too much crime like shootings. But this year is a bit quiet compared to last year.' Likewise, a reduction in the frequency of the sound of gunshots was one of the clearest indicators of people's feelings of increased security, which some attributed to the installation of GFZs in the area.

The establishment of GFZs has had a positive impact on people's perceptions of personal security. The most commonly reported change across all three case studies was the decrease in hearing gunshots. A GFSA activist in Diepkloof recalled that she used to hear gunshots every weekend: sometimes it was someone being killed and other times it was her young neighbour shooting his gun into the air: 'He still has his gun; he has not given it up but he is not using it like before. And now it has become much quieter.'

Although many participants acknowledged that GFZs had not been solely responsible for this change, they saw GFZs as a key contributing factor. The most important point to note is that according to interviewees, unlike in the past, guns are now rarely used—and this applied to all forms of crime. Although

interviewees said that guns are mostly seen at night, they added that these guns are often used in conjunction with other types of weapons. Increasingly guns are used as auxiliary, not the main, weapons of attack. One member of the Mapela Clinic focus group said:

*In most cases of mugging the story is the same, they point a gun at a victim and hit his head with a hammer. In some case there is a warning shot first, then they hit the victim with a beer bottle or a stone.*

The second visible impact was a noticeable difference in the public carrying of guns. This was particularly the case in Fothane, where all interviewees reported a significant reduction in public gun carrying and display. Nurses at the clinic in Fothane reported a significant reduction in the number of gunshot victims requiring treatment. In 2003 they had only two such cases. Kenneth Khota, a GFSA activist and employee at one of the high schools, said, 'although even some of our teachers are still owning guns, there is no more carrying of guns in the street and I think we are all safer now.' He added that this change had contributed to a much better atmosphere and climate of trust at the school, whereas before 'the relationships were slim'. One of the students (often referred to as 'learners' in South Africa) at Namedi High acknowledged: 'The numbers of learners who carry guns to school have decreased'.

The third positive impact of GFZs was people reporting that they felt safer inside a GFZ. Abner Mangaba, a youth activist in Fothane, works in a GFZ, as he has an office in one of the clinic buildings. He said, 'the GFZ symbol, as well as the wording "This is a Gun-free Zone", makes all of us feel safe. We know that once we are inside this building that guns are not allowed in this place.' The general point is that although GFZs do not offer an absolute guarantee of safety, the perception of increased safety is significant because it alters many social interactions.

### *Perceptions of security inside GFZs*

In evaluating people's perceptions of security, it is important to make a distinction between people's perceptions of security inside GFZs and their perceptions of security outside them. It is also important to understand the relationship between people feeling secure and actually being secure.



Each GFZ has its own unique dynamic. This relates to the nature of the service provided at any given premises and the profile of its consumers. People's perception of security was largely shaped by these dynamics. Thus the tavern (normally a place that would be regarded as unsafe) was one of the GFZs in which consumers had the most positive new sense of security. The study found that the GFZ status on its own was not enough to enhance people's sense of security—additional factors contributed to making people feel secure in GFZs. Thus, although Ma Stadig and her patrons attributed their increased sense of security to the gun-free status of her tavern, they also acknowledged that the tavern's group of patrons was familiar and known to each other, which helped build trust, thereby contributing to an increased sense of security.

Similarly, although the principal of Namedi High School felt that the school was previously a safe place in which to be, he noted that other factors contributed to the increased sense of security and not just the gun-free status of the school:

*I remember the days before this place was declared a Gun-free Zone; it was possible to find two boys engaged in a fight, both carrying guns. Normally the teacher would have to come in between the two learners, thus putting his life in danger. Talking to students in a proper way makes a difference, not simply a sign. We have to change society before we can change learners at school, thus declaring this place a Gun-free Zone is not enough.*

Generally people felt safer in GFZs than elsewhere. GFZs provide both staff and users with a sense of security, while making gun carriers uncomfortable. The increased sense of security was based on the assumption that a given building's GFZ status would deter most gun carriers from entering the premises. This assumption was informed by the fact that people commented positively about the GFZ sign and its meaning, and that no one had ever openly complained about GFZs. Sister Sebola at Mapela Clinic noted that since the health care centre had become a GFZ, both staff and patients felt safer, because they assumed that no one would enter carrying a gun. The same sentiments were echoed by focus group participants who used the clinic on a regular basis. The assumption was that since the clinic was a GFZ, no one would deliberately attempt to bring a gun into the building.

Pupils at Mmantutule High School also expressed a heightened sense of security when on the school premises. They said they felt that the school was built in such a way that it was easier to enforce a GFZ than at some other buildings. This was because anyone wishing to enter the school premises had to pass through an administration centre. Students assumed that the school administrators took responsibility for searching for guns and thus felt secure when on the school premises. One student said:

*When you quarrel with someone you are sure that the most extreme ways of resolving a dispute is either through a knife or [a] fist fight. If you can't win, you run away. However, when someone is carrying a gun, you cannot run away from a bullet. We trust that no one will bring a gun to school and thus we are more relaxed.*

At all the GFZs in Fothane, except at the Quick Motel bar, all interviewees noted that they did not recall seeing anyone bringing a gun into a GFZ. This sense of security is not far-fetched and should be understood in the context of social relations in Mapela district. Fothane is a closely knit community with some remnants of traditional Bapedi tribal culture and traditions. People know each other and can narrate each other's family lineage and history. People empathize and sympathize with each other. Performing communal functions is more important than individual credentials or skills in carrying out a task.<sup>44</sup> All these factors are present in the context of modern legal and administrative institutions, and thus the village represents an amalgam of tradition and modernity. The fact that the tribal authority there continues to play an important role in dispute resolution (within the context of modern institutions and mechanisms) is further evidence of the remnants of the area's indigenous culture. Historically, tribal authorities in South Africa have been responsible for conciliation, mediation, and arbitration and are regarded as symbols of unity.

Although there is no intention on the part of the authors to romanticize traditional communities, there seems to be pressure on individuals in the village of Fothane to conform to community expectations or risk the possibility of being ostracized or excluded. The fact that all stakeholders in Fothane, including the tribal authority, were involved in the initial GFZ meeting there shows that an attempt was made to include everyone from the start of the process.

Interviewees in Fothane said that given the nature of the community, it was unlikely that someone from Fothane would bring a gun into a GFZ. They said that if guns were brought into the village it was usually by people from neighbouring sub-villages, and that such people did not pose a threat to the community. The feeling of security was derived from the fact that Fothane residents generally do not carry firearms and that it would therefore be easier to identify a stranger entering the village carrying a gun. Any such person could then be encouraged to leave the village or be asked to leave his or her gun at home when visiting Fothane in future.

Although interviewees agreed that GFZs gave them an improved sense of security, they said that more work was needed to educate people about GFZs and the dangers of guns. Across all three case studies, interviewees called for more workshops and the establishment of an information centre to deal with the issue of guns. They added that although they felt safe in GFZs, they were also aware that, mainly because of widespread illiteracy, some people might not grasp the meaning of the GFZ sign or would simply ignore it.

The increased feelings of safety were not just generated by the GFZ sign. Other factors, such as who came into the public building and whether or not they were known, contributed to this feeling. This latter factor was particularly important in Fothane. The GFZ sign was in many ways perceived as being more about challenging the norm of carrying a gun than about stopping a gun owner from entering certain premises. Generally, the sign is a symbolic manifestation of an idea, but cannot on its own be 100 per cent effective. One conclusion to emerge from the study, particularly in Fothane, is that the perceived value of GFZs is not in the sign per se, but in the socially inclusive process of establishing the GFZ. This view was confirmed by George Thage, the owner of the Quick Motel, who said: 'The sign cannot have an impact without some education to accompany it. Otherwise people will just ignore it because our people suffer from ignorance. Our youth need to be educated; a youth group without parental guidance has no future.'

Patrons of the Kwa-Stadig Tavern said that they could relax when drinking at the tavern because they know that guns are not allowed. They noted that the absence of 'the youth' at the tavern made them more comfortable, and that security was therefore not an important issue for them. The common view

shared, both by the patrons and Ma Stadig, was that the GFZ sign discouraged such youth from visiting the tavern, hence patrons felt more comfortable. Patrons interviewed for the study said:

*Declaring this place a Gun-free Zone has helped us to feel more relaxed, since we know that guns are not allowed. Since the tavern was declared a Gun-free Zone, the youth have disappeared, hence we feel more secure.*

*It is true the youth always cause trouble. They are always fighting among themselves and they are more likely to bring guns into the tavern.*

*The Gun-free Zone sign has chased the youth from visiting this place because what they like is not allowed here: the gun.<sup>45</sup>*

Ma Stadig also said she felt more secure now that the youth had moved to other taverns:

*Since I put up the Gun-free Zone signs, they [the youth] all disappeared and now this place feels safe. An added factor is that all the people who drink here know each other very well, since they are all from this area, thus there is no chance that any of them would bring a gun in.*

It is clear that one of the main reasons for an improved sense of security at the Kwa-Stadig Tavern was the homogeneity of the clientele. The fact that strangers did not visit the tavern made the regulars feel comfortable and secure. Thus it was the homogenous character of the clientele *combined with* the GFZ that made them feel secure. In some ways this echoed the social homogeneity of Fothane village, where 'being known' was the most important factor in maintaining trust among people, enabling the GFZ to have a much greater positive impact on life in the village.

This sense of solidarity and of feeling secure in a GFZ was not shared by the students at Namedi High School, who said that the gun-free status of the school had not had any impact on their sense of security. They said they did not feel secure while on the school premises, primarily because of the lack of enforcement. They complained about the authorities' apparent lack of interest in enforcing the GFZ status of the school and noted that anyone could enter the school without being searched. They also noted that even if the school's

management did start to enforce the school's GFZ status, this would be ineffective because of the many entrances to the schoolyard.

The absence of formal mechanisms to enforce the GFZ status of the school and the failure of students to report those students who did bring guns onto the school premises left most of the students feeling insecure. One member of the focus group said:

*We never feel free because every time people disagree and start a fight we are not sure whether any or both of them is carrying gun[s] or not. The Gun-free Zone idea cannot work while we still have so many entrances. The school management must close all these illegal entrances and make sure that they employ a security officer to search all the boys who enter the schoolyard in the morning.<sup>46</sup>*

Despite these problems, there was, on the whole, support at the school for the ideal and the concept of GFZs. The evinced lack of support was based more on technical issues, such as effective enforcement mechanisms, and the absence of a clear policy, as well as doubts about whether violence would surface during personal conflicts.

The manager at the Ekhaya Community Centre said that there was a strong sense of security there. But many of the weightlifters using the centre said they did not feel secure, because of the culture of violence that existed in the township. The weightlifters, who came from different zones of Diepkloof, only met at the Ekhaya Community Centre and were not friends with each other. They all admitted that they did not trust each other because they did not know each other very well. They also doubted the ability of the gun-free status of the centre to change people's behaviour. One of the weightlifters said:

*To be honest, declaring a Gun-free Zone and putting up that sign does not necessarily have [any] impact. You always find people smoking in places declared no-smoking areas. This is because some people ignore signs and notices. The fact that there is a Gun-free Zone sign does not stop people from bringing their guns to the centre.*

Despite this being the stated view of some of the weightlifters, the researchers' observation was that, on the whole, guns were not brought into the Diepkloof GFZs, and that when they were, they were declared.

A patron at Pat's Tavern commented: 'Gun-free Zones have made [for] less criminal incidents. There was too much crime last year and since gun-free [ideas] went around the community many guns have been confiscated and there's less crime.'

Although participants felt safe in GFZs such as Pat's Tavern, they still expressed concerns about the high incidence of guns and crime when they left the tavern, especially as Khayelitsha was not safe. One customer explained:

*It's safer these days to drink in a place that is near to where you stay. You either drink at your place or near your place. It's not safe to go to leave the tavern at night and walk a long distance back to your place.*

### *Perceptions and experiences of security outside GFZs*

Although GFZs have helped challenge the acceptance of guns as a norm and reduced the extent of public gun carrying, particularly in the village of Fothane, it is not possible to look at a causal relationship between the establishment of GFZs and crime reduction, even though the most recent crime statistics show significant reductions in several categories of violent crime. A notable achievement, according to interviewees, is the reduction in gun violence. Although interviewees agreed that GFZs stigmatized guns and helped to reduce gun violence, it was not possible to find a positive correlation between the establishment of GFZs and the reduction in crime.

While the majority of interviewees felt safe inside GFZs, they did not necessarily feel safer in the streets outside GFZs. Thus, although people supported the establishment of GFZs, some said that the GFZs had not made the village of Fothane a safer place for them if they were unarmed. In all three of the focus group discussions held in Fothane, most people supported GFZs, but others said there was nothing wrong with owning a gun, as long as the owner did not take it into a GFZ. This in essence means that declaring places GFZs does not make the whole village or township a GFZ. To reach a GFZ, people typically have to pass many people carrying guns, some concealed, others exposed. The implication is that in places such as Diepkloof, GFZs are islands of safety in an ocean of guns. Under these circumstances, and in an environment of perceived police inefficiency and corruption, people still feel insecure, hence

the individualized demand for guns. A member of the Ekhaya Community Centre focus group said:

*The community lives in fear of criminals. You also feel that you want to carry a gun to protect yourself. It is important to protect yourself because the streets you walk through to reach the centre are not Gun-free Zones. You carry a gun for protection along the way, not for protection at your destination.*

It is important to look at ways in which the gun-free message can be reinforced in spaces outside the school GFZs, especially for the youth, who should eventually realize that GFZs are not a matter of schooling and discipline, but of addressing a social problem that affects them and their communities.

## **De-normalization of gun use and ownership: Demand factors, masculine identity, and women and guns**

### *Gun possession/use as a norm*

As mentioned above, people become accustomed to violence. This is reinforced by several factors, such as seeing violence every day, hearing gunshots every night, and being a victim of violence. Guns thus become normalized and part of people's everyday lives. People interviewed as part of the Ekhaya Community Centre echoed these sentiments:

*Gunshots are part of our lives; in the past we used to panic, when we heard gunshots. These days we continue with our lives as if nothing is happening.*

*We are so used to guns that if someone was to be shot in front of the gate now, we would go out to watch without any fear or concern.*

School students in the Namedi High School focus group discussion had the following to say:

*Sometimes people are shot following some minor arguments. These range from an argument over a girlfriend to a disagreement on sharing of spoils following a mugging.*

*Some students do take their parents' legal firearms to boast about them at school.*

One of the aims of the GFSA-led GFZ campaign was to challenge the widely accepted norm of gun ownership, providing people with alternative means of securing their safety. The GFZ initiative in communities such as Fothane enabled people to take a stand in challenging the norm of 'guns as legitimate'. This can be seen in the reported reduction of public gun carrying and of gunshots in Fothane. The most important factors contributing to the success or otherwise of a given GFZ project appeared to centre on the existence of a respected or well-known community initiator and having a thorough process of consultation with stakeholders within a socially cohesive community, rather than on any pre-existing societal norm against guns.

### *Demand for guns*

Most interviewees associated guns with the youth, although they also acknowledged that business people often had legal guns to protect their business interests. Given the lack of alternative sources of masculine identity, many young black men growing up in South Africa look for other ways of proving their manhood and masculinity. Belonging to a criminal gang or at least owning a gun is a mechanism through which such young men can prove their manhood and masculinity.<sup>47</sup> In using guns to build their self-esteem, these 'youth' very often end up committing gun-related crimes, for example using guns to rob, to rape, to settle arguments, and to commit suicide.

Some of the school students interviewed for this study reported that some of their fellow students carried their parents' guns over the weekend. They said that the aim of this behaviour was not necessarily to intimidate anyone or to commit a crime, but to brag to a few friends who were typically invited to a secluded area before they were given an opportunity to see and handle the gun. Further evidence of the remnants of the attraction and power of guns in South African society is that in August 2004, soon after the research team returned from Fothane, one male student took a toy gun to school. According to reports, he threatened to shoot other pupils who reported him to the school authorities. GFSA activist Samuel Kobela explained:

*According to the report I received, the gun looked exactly like a real gun and thus the teachers did not hesitate to call the police. When [the] police arrived*

*they discovered that it was a toy gun and the learner was arrested, but was later released into the custody of his parents, since he is underage.*

The quasi-militarized identity sought by young men in the townships through carrying guns derives from a particular notion of masculinity. In Fothane, all interviewees opposed the idea of women carrying guns for self-defence. Although males were in favour of gun ownership for self-protection, all of them were opposed to women's gun ownership. But all of the female interviewees, from Sister Sebola to female school students and the two female community development officers, were also opposed to the idea of women carrying guns for self-defence.

Although interviewees agreed that GFZs succeeded in stigmatizing guns and reducing gun violence, the same could not be said about a reduction in crime in general. Consequently, there was still a demand for guns for purposes of self-protection. One member of the Mapela Clinic focus group explained:

*I strongly feel that one must own a gun for self-defence. Last week I was making a call on a public telephone and there was another man who was making noise. I requested him to stop making noise since I could not hear the person on the other side. The man threatened to shoot me and I had to run away before I could confirm that he was carrying a gun. Now if I had a gun, I would stand my ground.*

This view was reiterated by a participant in the Mantutule High School focus group:

*I agree that we should respect Gun-free Zones, but we also have to protect our properties and ourselves. There is nothing wrong with owning a gun as long as you keep it in a safe place at home to protect yourselves against intruders. Can you imagine after working very hard to buy a car losing it to a thief because you do not own a gun? As a man you have to stand up to protect your family and property.*

A local gun owner—a frequent patron of the Quick Motel Tavern—echoed the self-defence argument. Although he supported the gun-free status of the tavern, because he felt it provided people with a secure environment in which to relax after a day at work, he also said that his personal circumstances compelled him to own a gun:

*I am self-employed as a motor mechanic and thus my occupation compels me to own a gun for security reasons. I fix motor vehicles on my residential premises and as you may be aware, some people struggle to give me money to buy the necessary spare parts or to pay me once the job is done. This means that I have to store their motor vehicles on my residential premises. I do not own an office or workshop from which to conduct financial transactions: all these take place on my residential premises. Sometimes people call me in the middle of the night to come [to] fix a motor vehicle that is stuck in a remote area. These days you cannot trust even your own customers.*

This continued desire to own guns results from the fact that, even though crime happens to individuals, most of these crimes are reported to the tribal authorities rather than to the police, a factor that further increases the demand for obtaining a firearm for self-protection. This is because, as stated earlier, the tribal authorities are widely viewed as a symbol of unity and it is believed that the community should strive for unity. However, tribal authorities cannot always deal with crime in a way that is effective and satisfies the victims: the tribal authorities do not have the capacity to conduct proper investigations and, even in cases where there is adequate evidence, they do not have the same powers as the modern magistrates' courts. Consequently, an institution that is meant to be a symbol of unity can often become a source of division. Individuals respond by arming themselves against criminals. In Mapela, for example, this is compounded by the fact that the nearest police station is 35 km away in Mahwelereng. Police patrols in the village are irregular, but when they do take place they reportedly produce positive results. According to patrons of the Quick Motel, police officers sometimes raid the tavern and confiscate guns, both legal and illegal. In such cases even legal gun owners are told to report to the police station, because they have violated the normative order of the GFZ.

Among all interviewees in this area, only Ma Stadig and Jonas Thage of the Ekhaya Community Centre were strongly opposed to gun ownership. Focus group participants at the Kwa-Stadig Tavern, although strongly opposed to bringing guns into the bar, did not express strong views against gun ownership in general. Their view was that people should be allowed to own guns as long as they did not take them to public places.

One of the positive impacts of GFZs in Fothane is the partial and tentative shift in the meaning of guns—from being seen mainly as an indicator of power and prestige, to being regarded as an indicator of lawlessness, inadequacy, and reduced manliness. There is a reworking of gender identities taking place here, changes that are uneven, contradictory, and complex. A militarized identity among the male youth was a recurring theme in all interviews. Most interviewees argued that young men who carried guns did not do so for protection, but rather to enhance their sense of manliness. A self-confessed former gun carrier, part of the Mapela Clinic focus group, stated that the only reason he used to carry a gun was because it made him feel ‘man enough’. But Mmantutule High School students said that gun carriers were often people who had low self-esteem. They associated guns with people who dropped out of school and had nothing to show for themselves in life. Nevertheless, guns still seem to carry positive connotations of social display. So there are now competing positive and negative social meanings surrounding guns in South African society.

### *Gender and guns*

As stated earlier, owning a gun is a mechanism through which many disadvantaged young men in South Africa feel they can prove their manhood and masculinity. This was also the case in Diepkloof, where Namedi High School students seemed more aware of this than all the other interviewees spoken with in this study, saying, for example:

*Young men who carry guns do so for two reasons, first to brag and second to boost their image and instil fears in others.*

*A guy would carry a gun in order to produce it during an argument resulting from a game of dice. Once he draws a gun, people would disperse, thus earning him both some attention and respect at the same time.*

*If a guy exposes his gun to [a] few learners, such learners would go around warning others about the fact that he possesses a gun and thus should be treated with respect.*

*A learner who exposes a gun is making a statement: ‘Don’t talk to me in a rough manner; show me some respect.’*

Comments from the Khayelitsha focus groups included: ‘Guys want to be feared and that is why they show off these guns. They feel incomplete without guns.’

Crime against women in South Africa is largely perceived as a domestic affair entrenched within culture and power relations between men and women. One participant observed:

*In a way I agree there is violence against women, but it is very silent. In every home if something wrong happens to women, they are supposed to keep quiet and not disgrace the family. Men have the final word and women are not supposed to speak up.*

Whereas many men in South Africa carry guns, women are generally thought of as being too easily scared to carry guns. Interviewees said women only carried guns in two cases: for safe keeping for their boyfriends or when businesswomen carried them for self-defence. Male participants said that it was easier to trust a woman with a gun than a man. Asked if women ever carried guns, one pupil at the Zola Secondary School focus group said:

*Last year many women were mugged in the mornings on their way to work. One morning a woman was approached by a thug who said to her, ‘Take out your cell phone, earrings and watch.’ She agreed and she reached into her bag and withdrew a gun, shot the guy and took a taxi to work.*

This was an exception to what most people generally perceived to be the case. One focus group participant at the Site B Public Library in Khayelitsha said: ‘We can’t say women don’t carry guns. It’s just that we have not seen them.’

The ward councillor in Khayelitsha had slightly different views. Although she agreed that one of the reasons young men were carrying guns was to make them feel powerful, she felt that most of this gun-carrying behaviour was attributable to the ‘bad influence’ of violence on television and inadequate monitoring of what the youth were watching. She also expressed the view that ‘we come from a culture where guns have not been around. Most of us don’t see the need for a gun. It’s a new thing this gun culture.’ She was one of the few interviewees who knew of young women involved in crime and who carried guns, often as accomplices to (mainly male) gangs. But rather than

viewing these women as seeking power through these actions, she regarded their behaviour as temporary, saying, 'they are just being silly and naughty. It will stop.'

### *Challenging the norm*

To some extent, the GFZs have achieved success in challenging the social acceptability of guns as a norm and, according to interviewees, in some instances, in reducing the carrying of guns in public, especially during the day. There are two examples to support this. The first relates to a young man who before GFZs were established was obsessed with carrying his uncle's guns. This young man, a participant of the Mapela Clinic focus group, explained:

*The introduction of Gun-free Zones has helped shape my attitude towards guns. Before the introduction of Gun-free Zones I used to steal my uncle's firearm and display it in public, bragging and threatening people. The workshops conducted by Gun-free South Africa and the establishment of Gun-free Zones have changed my attitude towards guns. I now feel embarrassed to carry a firearm in public. The most important lesson I have learnt is that guns facilitate family murders.*

The second example relates to a conversation between two women who had participated in an initial stakeholder meeting to introduce the GFZ, as described by a participant in the Mapela Clinic focus group:

*I agree that Gun-free Zones have managed to stigmatize guns. I remember some time after the workshop a small boy was playing with a toy gun and one of the women who had attended the workshop at the tribal hall said to the boy's mother: 'You will be in trouble with people from Gun-free South Africa. Did you not hear what Gun-free South Africa people say about toy guns? If you buy him a toy gun today, he will grow up believing in guns and when he grows up he will buy a real gun.'*

Because of the complex nature of the Diepkloof and Khayelitsha communities and factors that make them different from Fothane, including their high-density urban location, the greater demand for guns, the greater number of youth, and the weaker social cohesion there, GFZs have not succeeded in challenging the acceptance of guns as an acceptable societal norm to the same extent as

they have done in Fothane. Although Diepkloof consists of several different zones, people from different zones share some of the same amenities. For example, the Ekhaya Community Centre caters for people from different zones, as do the area's schools. Another factor differentiating this population centre from the other two in the study is the prior existence of a strong gun culture, which had its roots in the armed struggle against apartheid in the 1980s.<sup>48</sup>

These factors have made it more difficult to challenge the social acceptance of guns in places such as Diepkloof and Khayelitsha. A striking finding of this study was the lack of knowledge about the potential dangers of guns among grade 11 students at Namedi High School. Although newspapers and television programmes in South Africa frequently contain articles and broadcast documentaries and debates about the dangers of guns, none of the students questioned for the study showed any awareness of these issues. Similarly, although adult patrons of the Kwa-Stadig Tavern were opposed to people bringing guns into a GFZ, none of the participants was able to reflect on the potential danger of firearms to the owner of the gun and to his or her family, except to acknowledge that police officers were often attacked by people who wanted to steal their guns.

### **Impact on social cohesion: Changes in community practice**

Fothane village is the case study that best illustrates the positive impact of GFZs on changes in social practice, such as the reduction in the public carrying of firearms and in the overall compliance with GFZs across all GFZ sites. One of the reasons for this is the strong social cohesion in this particular community, which can be defined as 'shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups' (Cote and Healy, 2001, p. 4).

The difference in the effects of the GFZs recorded in Fothane and Diepkloof is partly attributable to the existence of strong social capital in Fothane. This is marked by social cohesion, shared norms and values, and a shared ethnic identity. The community, which is spread across 22 villages, is ruled by Chief Langa from the AmaNdebele tribe, but the majority of people living there are from the Bapedi tribe. Traditional authority still has an important role in the community, as evidenced by the fact that some criminal matters are still referred

to the tribal authority instead of to the police. The tribal authority serves as a symbol of unity and, as the process of establishing GFZs in Fothane showed, the tribal authority and other community structures form very strong formal networks through which projects such as GFZs can successfully be implemented.

A participant in the Mapela Clinic focus group described these changes in community practice:

*Gun-free South Africa and its Gun-free project helped us in three ways. First, to reduce the rate of gun violence, as it limits the number of places one can carry a gun in. Second, it taught gun owners about the potential dangers of guns to their owners, which include family suicide and the fact that gun carriers (including police officers) are often targeted for disarmament by thugs. Lastly, Gun-free South Africa taught us how to handle firearms by introducing the idea of a safe [in which] to store firearms.*

The other changes included an increased awareness of the danger of guns and of the need to limit their use. This was seen across all three case studies. Although there were some reservations about the efficacy of the GFZs, most informants reported a degree of compliance and support that suggest that the GFZs led to some real changes in community practice. 📌

## IV. Conclusion

The key finding of this study is that GFZs are an effective community building mechanism. The GFZ campaign can be seen as a ‘people driven’ crime-prevention programme that demonstrates that crime prevention is not just a policing function, but requires a partnership approach involving civil society, communities, and the police. This is in line with post-apartheid state thinking about social transformation. The GFZ project also had a number of unintended consequences, including the provision for FFZs in the Firearms Control Act of 2000.

GFZs have the potential to educate and confront the paradox of guns: how in practice they subvert the very security that theoretically they offer. The GFZ initiative has contributed to demystifying guns as ultimate security providers by creating secure, ordered public spaces in a society in transition that is marked by deep-seated anxieties, tensions, and fears. The GFZs examined in this study had a positive impact on people’s feelings of safety. This was expressed through concrete experiences such as a reduction in the number of gunshots heard and feelings of enhanced personal security in GFZs.

The GFZs examined did not act in isolation, but were dependent on a number of interrelated factors such as social cohesion, geographical location, community involvement, crime levels, and police practice. The impact of the GFZs was uneven across the three case studies and was most effective in socially cohesive communities and among groups with a sense of solidarity and interpersonal familiarity. The GFZ project also assisted in enhancing social cohesion and provided residents with a tangible means through which to express their commitment to a more safe and secure society.

The effective implementation of GFZs requires a strategic approach. This involves the identification of existing sympathetic constituencies, such as schools, churches, and health clinics, to lead the GFZ project at both the local and national levels. It also requires an understanding of how a community’s context has an impact on both the implementation and enforcement of GFZs. For example, in more densely populated areas such as Diepkloof, focusing on



a geographical zone rather than on specific constituencies, such as schools, may be more effective both in building community-based safety initiatives and in increasing public awareness of the gun issue.

Effective enforcement is critical to the success of GFZs, both in terms of building community solidarity and cohesion, and for increasing individuals' feelings of safety. Irrespective of the type of GFZ established, users of the GFZ space need assurance that the GFZ status is adhered to so that they can be certain that no guns will enter the GFZ. The research provides clear evidence of the importance of an inclusive, participatory approach to establishing GFZs. Not only does the GFZ project have the potential to build community-based safety initiatives, it also has the potential to build and give more impulse to the gun-free movement in South Africa.

Finally, the research suggests that the presence of a clearly identified leader for the GFZ programme, at both the national and local levels, is crucial for initiating and maintaining GFZs. A well-organized, well-resourced organization working in civil society, such as GFSA, needs to act as the lead agency in the GFZ project and must prioritize the establishment of more GFZs in order to sustain the existing GFZs and, in so doing, help build the gun-free movement, both in South Africa and elsewhere. 🗣️

## **Annexe 1**

### **Focus group questions**

#### **1. Knowledge**

- (i) What do you know about the gun-free zones initiative in this community?
- (ii) How did you hear about GFZs?
- (iii) What does this sign mean to you?
- (iv) How long have you been coming to [this] place? And when was it declared as a GFZ?
- (iv) Have you been to any other GFZs in your area?
- (v) Can you name the GFZs in your area?
- (vi) Why do you think GFZs have been established in your area?

#### **2. Process**

- (i) Do you know how the GFZ project was brought to this area? If so, describe what happened?
- (ii) Who is involved in the gun-free zone project?

#### **3. Enforcement**

- (i) How is this GFZ enforced?
- (ii) Do you know if there is a policy or is anything written down?
- (iii) What happens when you arrive at the GFZ?
- (iv) Do you know if there have been incidents of people arriving with guns at a GFZ? And what has happened?

#### **4. Perceptions of consumers and community**

- (i) What do other people who use the place, such as the learners, think about the place being a GFZ?
- (ii) How do you feel about the GFZ project?
- (iii) Have there been any complaints about the GFZs, and if so what have people said?
- (iv) What do others in the community think about the GFZs?

## 5. Impact

(a) on the place (premises)

(i) Has the GFZ project made a difference in your community?

(ii) Say how it has made a difference, e.g. do more people come [to] the GFZs; do they interact differently in any way since the [start of the] GFZ project?

(iii) Probe for social interactions and feelings of security, e.g. are people more relaxed, trusting, etc.?

(b) on the community

(i) Since the GFZ project has been in your area have you noticed that less people are carrying guns?

(ii) And has it had an impact on crime in your area? Say how.

## 6. Support

(i) What role have the police played in the GFZ project and what role do you think they should play?

(ii) What do you know about the organization Gun-free South Africa?

## 7. Community Practice

(i) What kinds of crime take place in your area? *Probe for types of crime and incidence of gun violence.*

(ii) Do people in this area carry guns? *Explore who carries, young men, councilors, etc., and for what purpose.*

(iii) Where do the guns come from?

## 8. Gender

(i) What is the gender nature of the consumers of this GFZ? Is it mainly men, or women, or mixed?

(ii) Is there a problem of violence against women in this community? Say more about this and what weapons are used against women.

(iii) How do you see the relationship between men and firearms?

(iv) Should women be carrying guns?

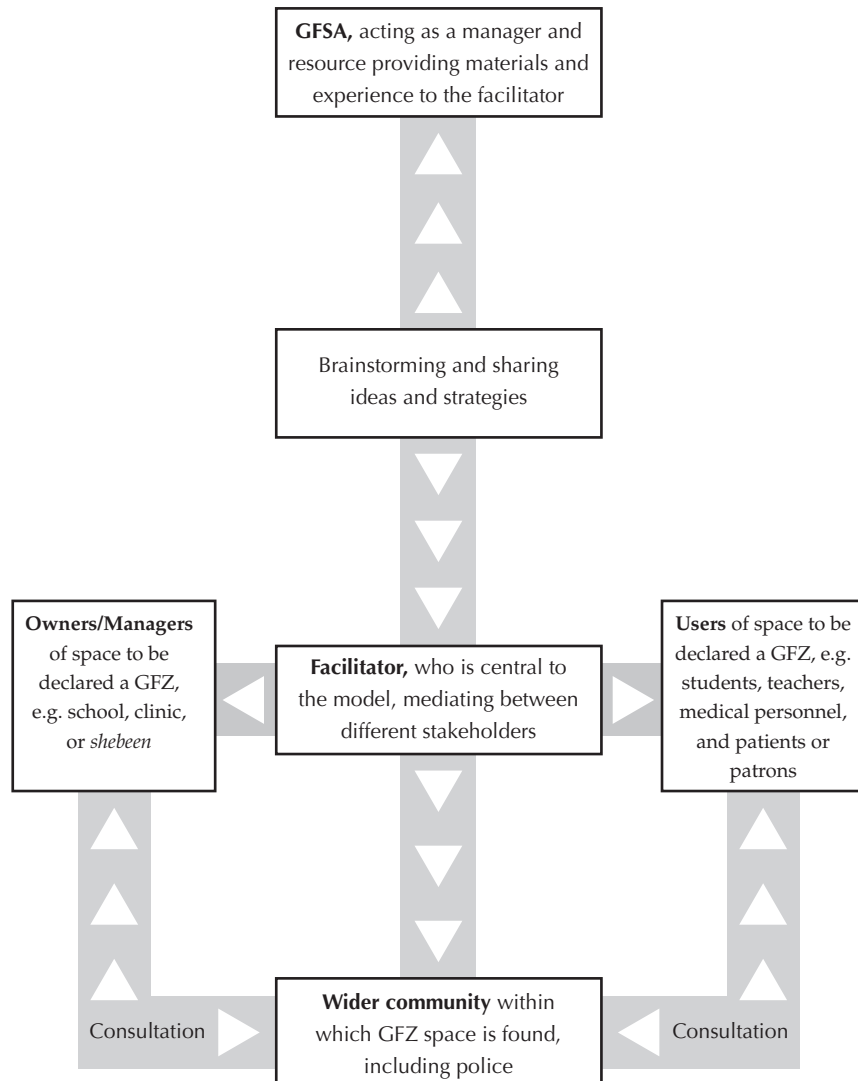
## Annexe 2 List of people interviewed

Name	Position	Institution
Hamilton Langa	Ward 15 councillor in Mogalakwena municipality	ANC
Kenneth Khota	GFSA activist and administrator at Mantutule High School	GFSA
Abner Mangaba	Youth activist and coordinator	Mahube Youth Development Project
Samuel Kobela	GFSA activist	GFSA
Sergeant Lucas Chokwe	Designated firearms officer (DFO)	SAPS Firearms Unit at Mahwelereng police station
Captain Piet Botha	Head of the Crime Information Analysis Centre	SAPS, Mahwelereng police station
George Thage	Manager/Owner	Quick Motel
Tavern consumer	Patron	Individual
Tavern consumer	Patron	Individual
Sister Onica Sebola	Manager	Mapela Clinic
Mr Abraham	Manager	Community centre
Mosima Sethoga	Community development officer	Community centre
Development officer	Development officer	Community centre
Focus group	Patrons of Quick Motel	n/a
Focus group	Users of Mapela Clinic	Community House-based care workers
Focus group	Grade 11 students	Mantutule High School
Thabiso Mollo	GFSA activist; unemployed youth	GFSA

Sibongile Dlamini	GFSA activist; unemployed	GFSA
Sibonelo Motlhale	Youth activist; unemployed	Diepkloof Youth Against Crime
Inspector Mpanthswa	Communications and education officer	SAPS, Diepkloof police station
Councillor Zuma	Ward 27 councillor, Diepkloof —includes Zone 4, Extension Phase 1–3, and part of Zones 1, 5 & 6	ANC
Habit Makhatini	Administrator at the Diepkloof Council Office; young man of 25 who owns a gun	Individual
Ma Stadig	Manager	Kwa-Stadig Tavern
Female consumer	Patron	Individual
Female consumer	Patron	Individual
Principal	Principal	Namedi High School
Educator	Teacher	Namedi High School
Jonas Thage	Manager	Ekhaya Community Centre
Female consumer	Part of sewing cooperative	Ekhaya Community Centre
Male consumer	Patron	Ekhaya Community Centre
Sister Dawn	Manager; sister in charge	Diepkloof TB Clinic
Focus group	Patrons of Kwa-Stadig Tavern	n/a
Focus group	Grade 11 students	Namedi High School
Focus group	Body builders	Ekhaya Community Centre
Denis Matwa	AIDS activist and programme organizer	Treatment Action Campaign
Nkosiyabo Monqo	GFSA activist and initiator of GFZs in Khayelitsha	GFSA
Councillor Jonas	Ward councillor in Khayelitsha covering Sites AT, ATB, BT, BB, Thembani, Bukari, part of Chris Hanani section, and part of Site C	ANC

Inspector Nkwitshi	Head of partnership policing in Crime Prevention, which includes sector policing	Khayelitsha police station in Site C
Superintendent Abels	Acting head of Crime Prevention, which includes the DFO and Crime and Liquor Unit	Khayelitsha police station in Site C
Thembani Dyule	GFSA fieldworker in Western Cape	GFSA
Boniswa	Female customer	Pat's Tavern
Mr Mabula	Teacher	Zola Secondary School, Khayelitsha
Mr Bita	Chair of School Governing Body	Zola Secondary School, Khayelitsha
Tamara Qaba	Initiator of GFZ at Site B Clinic	GFSA
Security guards	Clinic	n/a
Sister at clinic	Clinic	n/a
Security guards	Community centre	n/a
Mr Nkululeko	Former chairperson of GFSA in Khayelitsha	GFSA
Focus group	Patrons at Pat's Tavern	n/a
Focus group	Users at Site B Library	n/a
Focus group	Grade 11 students at Zola Secondary School, Khayelitsha	n/a
Lihle Cwinya-Ai	GFSA regional organizer in KwaZulu-Natal	GFSA
Claire Taylor	Previously GFSA communications and research officer	Independent
Benita Pavlicevic	Manager of the FFZ schools project	Consultant
Joseph Dube	Previously GFSA national organizer	Amnesty International campaigns coordinator
Supt. Joubert	Illegal Firearms Unit	SAPS Headquarters

## Annexe 3 GFSA's GFZ model



## Annexe 4 Church synod resolutions

### Minutes of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa's Annual Conference

Excerpted from Methodist Church of Southern Africa (1994).

#### 28.4.2.14 Weaponry and Gunfree Campaign

Conference declares its belief that trust in deadly weapons is a sign of our failure to fashion a society free of violence and fear and that the only long-term answer to this problem lies in obeying God's teaching about caring humane relationships and respect for life.

Conference:

1. Calls on all in civil society, especially Methodists, to turn away from owning firearms.
2. Requests the Government to ban private ownership of firearms.
3. Affirms the Gun-free South Africa Campaign designed to achieve the voluntary surrender of firearms and calls on all Methodists to participate in this campaign.
4. Directs our Ministers not to assist people to gain firearm licences.
5. Directs that no firearm be brought to worship services and other meetings of our Church.
6. Calls on toy manufacturers to stop manufacturing gun replicas of any kind.

Conference also calls on Methodists to work for the conversion of the arms industry in SA to the production of humane civilian products with due consideration to existing employment levels and/or adaptation of present skills.

## Resolutions of the Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa

Excerpted from CPSA (1995).

Key resolutions are highlighted in bold (present author's emphasis).

### 18 DISARMING THE MIND OF THE NATION

This synod

- 18.1. Notes with concern the climate of militarisation that still exists within the nations of southern Africa and its pervasive influence on all aspects of people's lives, together with the role it plays in promoting the current culture of violence;
- 18.2. Commends the governments of countries within the geographical boundaries of the CPSA for their initiatives to counter the climate of militarisation. In particular we commend the South African Government of National Unity for the Cameron report and its decision to place arms sales under the authority of the special Cabinet committee. We call upon the said government to extend this committee by allowing for the active participation in that committee of religious leaders;
- 18.3. Commends the Governments of Mozambique, Namibia and Angola on their initiatives in establishing demining programmes within their countries;
- 18.4. Calls upon all governments throughout the world to ban the manufacturing, storing, exporting, importing, giving and use of landmines, letter bombs and similar devices;
- 18.5. Calls upon all government and donor agencies to contribute more generously towards demining programmes in the various countries affected by landmines;
- 18.6. **Calls upon the South African Government of National Unity to move towards the abolition or drastic curtailment of firearms possessed by civilians through the introduction of such legislation and measures as will make it increasingly difficult for civilians to possess a firearm. Only by reducing the number of firearms and the right of people to own and use them can the spiral of violence be halted.**

- 18.7. Notes with appreciation the decision by the South African Government to place a total ban on dealing in landmines and requests the Metropolitan to convey this to the President of the RSA [Republic of South Africa] and the Minister of Defence, while reiterating its view that no landmine whatsoever should be manufactured in the RSA;
- 18.8. **Declares all churches in the CPSA "A Gun-free Zone".**  
**Calls on its members through diocesan structures and at parochial level to publicize and support the Gun-free Campaign started in 1993, and to support the Gun-free Zone Campaign, details of which will be available on CPSANET.**  
**Challenges its members to surrender their guns together with their licences to the police.**

## **Annexe 5**

### **Cape Town City Council proposed policy relating to declaring certain Council premises Gun-free Zones**

1. As many Council premises as possible should be declared Firearm-free Zones under terms of provisions of Section 140 (1) of the Firearms Control Act, 2000 (Act No. 60/2000).
2. Applications to the Minister of Safety and Security relating to (1) above will be made subject to available financial and human resources as well as the suitability of the premises to be effectively managed as such.
3. As a point of departure, the Minister of Safety and Security is to be requested to declare the following premises as Firearm-free Zones:
  - The Executive Chambers
  - The Office of the City Police Chief
4. All City Clinics be declared Gun-free Zones and once adequate systems are in place, consideration be given to declaring all City Clinics Firearm-free Zones.
  - The declaration of Clinics as FFZs will be subject to the results of an extensive consultation process to determine which clinics should first be accommodated in relation to availability of Council Security Staff.
5. All Council premises accommodating Sub-Council chambers and associated offices as well as all Integrated Service Centres (ISC) are to be declared Gun-free Zones with full enforcement measures and not Firearm-free Zones due to the fact that these premises will be difficult to manage as FFZs.
6. All Council Cash offices are to be declared Gun-free Zones that are based solely on trust, with the proviso that these offices be inspected on an individual basis in an effort to identify those that in fact can be declared FFZs. Cash offices that are identified as such are to be declared FFZs.
7. Other Council premises such as Finance and Housing offices where the absence of firearms are regarded as essential be declared [*sic*] Firearm-free Zones or Gun-free Zones with full enforcement measures, inclusive of security guards and metal detectors, in terms of the principles established in (1) and (2) above.
8. Council premises where it is deemed necessary to inform the public that firearms are unwelcome, to be declared Gun-free Zones without installation of equipment and deployment of staff.
9. No firearm-owner to be expected to hand in his/her weapons for safe-keeping on Council premises if full enforcement measures that are aimed at keeping the area firearm-free are not in place.
10. Proper signage to be displayed at the entrance to all Firearm-free Zones and Gun-free Zones for purposes of informing entrants of the status of the area.
11. Full enforcement measures to be regarded as active point duty by security officers as well as the utilization of metal detectors and firearm safes.
12. The City manager is mandated to apply to the Minister of Safety and Security to declare premises provided for in this policy as Firearm-free Zones.
13. Operational procedures to be performed at Gun-free Zones and Firearm-free Zones inter alia include the following:
  - (a) Entrants to controlled areas will be required to hand in their firearms when entering Gun-free Zones that provide for full enforcement measures as well as areas declared by the Minister of Safety and Security as Firearm-free Zones in terms of the Firearms Control Act, 2000 (Act No. 60 of 2000).
  - (b) Firearms to be stored in individual gun safes designed to hold only one handgun.
  - (c) Gun safes are to be 'dual keyed' with the result that neither the Security staff nor the gun owner can access the safe without the other being present. The owner of the firearm to keep the second safe key in his/her possession until such time that he/she retrieves the weapon.
  - (d) The necessary procedures with regard to the operation of Firearm-free Zones and Gun-free Zones such as registers to be developed, implemented and maintained.

## Endnotes

- 1 The Tiisa Thuto ('We Strengthen Education') schools project is a crime-prevention project and a joint initiative by NGOs, government, and Business Against Crime.
- 2 This is a ratio of 106 firearms for every 1,000 people. This figure is based on the 1999 mid-year population estimate of 43 million (Chetty, 2000, p. 32).
- 3 Data covering the period 1 January to 31 December 2003. The percentages are from deaths registered across seven of South Africa's nine provinces, with a total of 24,600 non-natural deaths recorded, which represents at least 35 per cent of all injury deaths.
- 4 Interview with Superintendent Joubert, SAPS Serious Crime Unit, Pretoria, 13 September 2004.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 No prices were available for the Western Cape Province, but all other provinces were covered. ZAR 6.52 = USD 1 (rate as at 31 August 2005).
- 7 Interview with Superintendent Joubert, SAPS Serious Crime Unit, Pretoria, 13 September 2004.
- 8 Interview with Rev. Dr Peter Storey, Cape Town, October 2002. Storey was one of several high-profile national religious leaders during the apartheid era and was heavily involved in the peace process leading up to the elections in South Africa in 1994.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Self-defence units was the term given to paramilitary groups of young black men and women whose aim was to protect black communities from the security forces of the apartheid state. They were loosely affiliated to the armed wing of the ANC.
- 11 Interview with Jay Naidoo, a leading trade unionist during the 1980s and general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) from 1986 until 1990. He served in the first post-apartheid government under President Nelson Mandela and is now a businessman.
- 12 Interview with Storey, op. cit.
- 13 Interviews with two GFSA activists and ex-employees, Joseph Dube (national organizer) and Claire Taylor (communications co-ordinator), October 2004, Cape Town.
- 14 GFSA has a database of more than 400 GFZs spread across eight of South Africa's nine provinces, with the exception of the Northern Cape. The database mainly covers community-based GFZs and does not include many of the national government buildings, banks, corporate offices, and churches that have been declared GFZs. The database consists of those institutions and individuals that have registered with GFSA. GFSA activists gather this information. In Gauteng Province, GFZs are found in central Johannesburg, Joubert Park, Diepkloof, Meadowlands, Pimville; in Vereeniging, Sebokeng, Boipatong, Orange Farm, and Bophelong in the Vaal; and in Geluksdal, Tsakane, and Brakpan on the East Rand. In the Tshwane Metropole there are GFZs in Atteridgeville, Garankuwa, Mamelodi, and Sunnyside. In Western Cape Province, GFZs are found in Observatory, Cross Roads, Khayelitsha, Mowbray, Mitchells Plain, Elsies River, Nyanga, Phillipi, Lavender Hill, Bellville, Rondebosch, Retreat, Wynberg, Claremont, Salt River, and Woodstock. In Limpopo Province, GFZs are found in Polokwane, Mokopane, Fothane, Mapela, and Thohoyandou.
- 15 The publication of a bill is the first phase in the parliamentary process of making new law. Typically, a parliamentary committee receives written submissions on the bill, and public hearings are then held at which oral presentations are made. After this, the committee can make changes to the bill, and then submits it to Parliament for a second reading. If the bill is approved by Parliament, it is enacted, becoming a law or an Act.
- 16 This phrase, using a form of township slang, has its roots in the isiZulu language.
- 17 According to section 140 of the FCA, the minister may declare any premises or category of premises to be an FFZ. In terms of this declaration, no person may allow, carry, or store any firearm or ammunition in an FFZ.
- 18 There are 20 villages under the jurisdiction of the Mapela district, of which Fothane is one. The others are Sandsloot, Malepetleke, Phafola, Hans, Ga Chokoe, Mohlotlo, Ga Matlou, Ga Molekane, Rooival, Ga Chaba, Danisani, Machikiri, Ga Pila, Ga Mokaba, Scheming, Mashahleng, Sekuruwe, Ga Mabusela, and Ditlotswane.
- 19 In an informal conversation, one nurse revealed that although she was happy to be working closer to her home, her move to Mapela Clinic meant a major change in her job. This was because she had moved from a hospital where the doctor was responsible for making diagnoses to a clinic where she had to do the diagnoses herself.
- 20 Interview with the ANC ward councillor for Ward 27, Mr Zuma.
- 21 SAPS annual report 2004 at [www.saps.gov.org](http://www.saps.gov.org). Crime in the RSA for the period April to March 1994/95 to 2003/2004. Station: Diepkloof.
- 22 SAPS annual report 2004 at [www.saps.gov.org](http://www.saps.gov.org). Crime in the RSA for the period April to March 1994/95 to 2003/2004. Station: Diepkloof.
- 23 The October 2004 statistics (the latest figures available at the time of the interview) show that 9,735 patients visited the clinic in October.
- 24 'Stadig' is an Afrikaans word meaning 'slow'. According to the tavern owner, her late husband was a very slow person, which earned him the nickname 'Stadig'. *Kwa* means 'at the place of', thus Kwa-Stadig means 'at the place of Stadig'.
- 25 'Comrades' was the name used to describe the youth activists (most of whom were high school students) who, apart from organizing against the apartheid government, also organized against criminals. In some cases they set up people's courts to discipline criminals, suspected police informers, and collaborators.
- 26 During the interview with the principal of Namedi High School, the deputy principal came into the principal's office to report on two boys not wearing school uniform who were on the school premises. She added that the two boys were not following the day's school programme. 'When I asked them why they were not in school uniform, they responded by stating that their enemies are waiting for them outside the school gate, hence they have to use private clothes to disguise their identity', the deputy principal said. She further informed the principal that she was going to release the two boys for a week to allow them to solve their problem. Her argument was that the lack of cooperation from the two boys had the potential to distract other pupils. 'They will also give other learners an impression that they can come to school without putting on a school uniform', she said.

27 Khayelitsha is a Xhosa word meaning, 'new home': many people thought that they were getting new homes when they were forcibly removed and relocated to townships.

28 Harare, Maccasar, Makhaya, Town 2, Thembani, Site B, Site C, and Khayelitsha make up the township of Khayelitsha.

29 Statistics taken from the SAPS annual report released on 21 September 2004 (SAPS, 2004) and *Sunday Times* (2004).

30 Raji Matshedisho had difficulty getting a coherent picture of the process of declaring community halls GFZs. At one Site C community hall he contacted Mr Skili, the caretaker. Raji said: 'I asked him about the Gun Free Zone project. He knew nothing about it. I showed him the Gun Free Zone symbol. He said that he had never seen the sign before. He told me that there were two Site C community halls; the old one at which he was the caretaker and the new one in which Mr Gani was the caretaker. He then referred me to Mr Gani and asked me to come back to him to explain about this Gun Free Zone thing and why his hall had no such sign.'

Raji continued: 'the new hall has two Gun Free Zone symbols at the main entrance. One reads: "Leave your fear at the door" and the other reads "This is a gun free zone." I asked Mr Gani about the Gun Free Zone project and he said that he had no idea [about it]. I showed him the symbol and he recognized it but said that he did not know what it meant. He then gave me a number to call Mr Ndulukazi who is at the city council offices in Khayelitsha. He also had no idea about the Gun Free Zone project.

'I also spoke to people around the hall about the project and the symbols. No one knew about the project but recognized the sign and its meaning: that people are not supposed to come in with guns. I asked them if they knew who put the signs at the entrance. They told me that the city council put the symbols there. They also told me that they wished I could give them answers to the question I was asking them.

'The Oliver Tambo Community Hall (Site C) had no GFZ signs except the no-smoking sign [*sic*]. I asked the security/receptionist about the Gun Free Zone project. He had no idea except to say that all the halls in Khayelitsha are weapons-free zones. I then asked him about the Gun Free Zone symbols. He said that he recognized the symbols. I asked why the hall had no signs. He said that not all of them have signs because some of the signs have worn off. I did not believe him because Oliver Tambo Hall is relatively new: even its brass plaque still shines. He then told me to contact Mr Gani.'

The researcher then visited the city council offices in Khayelitsha. He made enquiries and no one was able to assist him. The council offices also had no Gun Free Zone symbols or any written prohibition on weapons in the premises. Neither the City Police nor the manager of the Social Crime Prevention Project knew about the Gun Free Zones project in Khayelitsha. They knew about the Firearms Control Act of 2000 and mentioned that the City Police force was working with the metropolitan council on a proposed policy to declare certain council premises Gun Free Zones.

31 In the NIMSS (2004) report, 43 per cent of firearm murder victims had positive blood alcohol content levels, indicating alcohol abuse. This was in a national sample of 4,077 murder victims.

32 Although both taverns and *shebeens* are drinking places or bars, they differ in nature. Taverns are legally registered outlets for the sale of alcoholic beverages, whereas *shebeens* are not, and are thus illegal.

33 What is a gun-free zone?

- In a gun-free zone no firearms are allowed
- Gun carriers must declare their firearms at reception on arrival
- Gun-free zones are intended to help protect people who live and work in them
- Don't you feel safer in a place where you know that nobody is carrying a gun?

34 The GFSA director and national organizer were present at this stakeholder meeting, which was attended by approximately 80 people, including the tribal chief and members of her tribal council.

35 Interview with Sister Onica Sebola of the Mapela Clinic, July 2004.

36 Joseph Dube was employed by GFSA in 1996 as a part-time fieldworker. His primary task was to implement the GFZ project at grass-roots level. In 1998 he was employed full time by GFSA and in 1999 he was promoted to the position of national organizer. He played a key role throughout his eight years with GFSA in the conceptualization, adaptation, and implementation of the GFZ campaign.

37 Mapela Clinic focus group, July 2004.

38 Namedi High School focus group, August 2004.

39 Kwa-Stadig tavern focus group, October 2004.

40 In terms of the FCA, the firearm needs to be in the possession of the licensed owner at all times, unless stored in a safe. So it is an offence to keep someone else's weapon.

41 The owner, keen on reinforcing his earlier view (given during the interview), told the researcher that even though the gun was visible, no one would bother to inform him (the owner) and that it was his responsibility to confront the gun carrier. The researcher left the premises at 9.50 p.m., before the owner confronted the gun carrier, which casts doubts on the owner's willingness to enforce the gun-free status of Quick Motel. He had been there since 6pm.

42 This is a form of prostitution, but because the girls are under age, it is regarded as statutory rape.

43 Interview with Mapela police officer, July 2004.

44 For example, since most of the priests and ministers of the local churches are not residents of Fothane, anyone with some recognized status in the community can be asked to perform religious duties, such as presiding over a funeral. While in Fothane on a Friday in the company of a local teacher, a member of the research team met a local school principal who informed his colleague (the school teacher accompanying the researcher) that he was preparing to stand in for a religious minister who could not make it to a night vigil.

45 Kwa-Stadig tavern focus group, October 2004.

46 Namedi High School focus group, October 2004.

47 In Fothane there is no evidence of the existence of formal gangs. It seems that individual young men use guns to cooperate on an ad hoc basis or operate as individuals. Interviewees also reported that in most cases a group of young men uses one gun to attack. Usually a gang would be in possession of multiple weapons.

48 In the late 1980s, after the ANC called on the black population to make the country 'ungovernable', the 'youth' frequently attacked security officers in order to take their guns. There was also a culture of car-jacking, which involved attacking delivery vehicles belonging to white-owned companies at gunpoint. Delivery vans entering townships were thus considered legitimate targets. In some cases cars belonging to local residents were also attacked, hence motorists started to buy bumper stickers that carried slogans such as I ♥ SOWETO



and I ♥ ALEXANDRA (a township to the north of Johannesburg) in order to make their cars easily identifiable as belonging to locals. Although some argued that car-jacking was part of the struggle against apartheid, some criminal elements hid behind the label of a war for liberation in order to carry out car-jackings.

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