



National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlehabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

Submission to the Portfolio Committee on Police

Equal Education

Parliament's Inquiry into Gang-related Violence: Learner Safety

19 August 2026

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlehabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

1. Overview

Equal Education (“**EE**”) is a movement of learners, post-school youth, parents, and community members advocating for quality and equality in the South African education system. The work of EE draws from the experiences of its members to guide policy analysis and research. The movement organises its activities in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and Limpopo.

We welcome the opportunity to make this submission to the Portfolio Committee on Police’s parliamentary inquiry into gang-related violence. Although we are organised in more than 5 provinces, this submission is informed by our learner members based in the Western Cape. We make this submission from the perspective of learners who live, learn, and travel through communities affected by gang violence. Our learner members are located in areas such as Khayelitsha, Langa, Nyanga, Mfuleni, Delft, and Kraaifontein, among other areas. These are some of the notorious areas where there have been reports about gang violence, murders, and gun violence affecting young people.

Our submission is informed by a decade of learner-led organising, research, and advocacy on school safety, as well as recent qualitative feedback obtained directly from learner members for this parliamentary process. The questionnaire completed by learners was specifically designed to obtain their experiences of gang-related violence and their recommendations to the Portfolio Committee on Police (“**the Committee**”). It is well noted throughout the submission that gang-related violence as experienced by learners is not simply a problem of crime in the community but a direct threat to their safety, education, dignity, well-being, and future.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Lumphumezo Ngcetane.

Our learner members reported experiences including:

- Gunshots near schools and in residential areas;
- Gang activity and gang members entering school premises;
- Drug dealing near schools;
- Bullying and intimidation;
- Violence on the way to and from school;
- School closures and disruption of learning;
- Fear of attending school;
- Robberies, stress and fear associated with the school environment.

One of our learners told us:

“We do not feel safe at school because there are learners who are part of gangs, and their [gang] members enter the school during school hours, and it affects my education.”

Another learner stated:

“When gangs control the streets around schools, attendance drops, exams get missed, and trauma becomes the norm.”

Another put it more starkly:

“Students are not safe, students are innocent, people are dying.”

These statements illustrate why gang violence must be approached as a criminal-justice crisis and a learner-safety crisis simultaneously. The Constitution places positive obligations on the state to respect, protect, promote and fulfil rights. Section 12 protects everyone from violence from public or private sources. While sections 28 and 19 protect children from maltreatment,

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlehabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

neglect, abuse, and degradation and make their best interests paramount and guarantee everyone the right to a basic education.

Furthermore, the Constitution gives the police a clear mandate to prevent, combat, and investigate crime, maintain public order, protecting and securing inhabitants and their property, and upholding and enforcing the law. The legal framework therefore requires more than a reactive response after a shooting has occurred. It requires a policing and governance response that protects learners from foreseeable and recurring threats to their safety. Accordingly, this submission asks Parliament to adopt a learner safety lens in its inquiry.

In accordance with the learner safety approach, the Committee, in every aspect of the inquiry, should ask the following:

What does gang violence mean for learners, and what must the state do to ensure that learners can safely travel to school, enter school, remain at school, learn, and return home?

EE recommends that the Committee:

- Strengthen functional school safety committees and school-community policing relationships;
- Ensure that school safety includes routes to and from school, not merely the school gate;
- Ensure that learners affected by violence have access to psychosocial support;
- Establish mechanisms for learners to participate meaningfully in decisions concerning school safety;

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

- Require regular public reporting on learner-safety indicators, including incidents around schools, disruptions to learning, police response, illegal firearms, drug markets, and learner perceptions of safety;
- Placing learner safety explicitly within the terms of its assessment of community impact and policing effectiveness;
- Require SAPS to develop school-hotspot policing plans in gang-affected communities;
- Strengthen visible policing around schools and learner travel routes at relevant times;
- Target gang economies, drug markets and illegal firearm networks rather than focusing primarily on low-level arrests;
- Require SAPS and education authorities to establish measurable responses to gang activity around schools.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

2. Introduction

For more than a decade, EE has worked with learners to document unsafe school environments, organise and advocate for safer schools, engage government and hold public institutions accountable for their constitutional and statutory responsibilities. The present submission is an extension of our work on #iSafetyNgoku, ensuring that learners are able to enjoy their right to basic education without fear of violence. EE welcomes this inquiry by the Committee. We are hopeful and particularly encouraged by the consideration of learners' perspectives relating to gang violence.

EE's #iSafetyNgoku campaign is grounded in four interconnected pillars of schools safety: Security measures in line with the school infrastructure law; functional school-based safety structures; adequate provision of psychosocial support; and knowledge of and use of existing policies. Critically, policing is not itself one of these four pillars but rather forms part of a broader coordinated and intersectional school safety policy framework. It does not, on its own, address the underlying conditions that produce and reproduce gang violence. An over-reliance on policing can also contribute to the criminalisation of learners. However, it is clear that learners desperately desire credible, visible, and responsive protection from gang violence in their schools and communities.

Gang violence is often discussed through statistics concerning murders, shootings, arrests, prosecutions, firearms and drug seizures. These indicators are important. However, they do not fully capture what gang violence does to a child trying to attend school.

For a learner, gang violence can mean the following:

- Choosing whether it is safe to walk to school;
- Avoiding particular streets;
- Missing school because of a shooting;

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

- Being unable to write an examination;
- Directly and indirectly witnessing violence;
- Being threatened or intimidated;
- Encountering drugs or drug dealers;
- Seeing gang members enter school premises;
- Being recruited or pressured into gangs;
- Being unable to concentrate in class;
- Experiencing trauma;
- Fearing dismissal time because shootings occur in the area.

Our learner questionnaire undertaken for this submission demonstrates precisely this lived reality for many learners. Learners were asked whether gang-related violence had affected them, their schools, or their communities during the previous year, what they had experienced, what government and police should do, and what message they wanted Parliament to hear.

3. Purpose and methodology of this submission

This submission has three purposes.

Firstly, it places learner experiences before Parliament. Secondly, it connects those experiences to the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the state. Thirdly, it translates learner demands into concrete recommendations for the Committee. As part of work with our learner members, we have been engaged in ensuring that learner safety is prioritised.

In 2016, learners helped generate evidence about unsafe schools. In 2017, learners marched to police stations and Parliament demanding visible policing. In 2019, EE returned to schools and found that gang violence remained a major safety concern. In

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlhabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

2022 and 2023, EE increasingly emphasised prevention and psychosocial support. In 2026, learners are again telling Parliament:

“It affects our learning and gives us stress and fear of school.”

And:

“Students are not safe, students are innocent, people are dying.”

These voices should not disappear once the Committee’s hearings are over.

3.1. **Learner feedback**

EE obtained written responses from learner members using a questionnaire developed specifically to inform this submission. The questionnaire asked learners:

- Whether gang-related violence had affected them, their school or their community in the previous year;
- What forms of violence they had experienced;
- What government and police should do to better protect learners; and
- what message they wanted Parliament to hear.

The completed questionnaires show respondents predominantly in the 16–18 age category, with some younger and older respondents. EE does not present this exercise as a statistically representative survey of learners in Cape Town or the Western Cape.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

Rather, it is qualitative learner testimony gathered to inform Parliament about experiences that quantitative crime statistics can obscure.

3.2. What learners are saying

“We do not feel safe at school”

The strongest theme emerging from the responses is insecurity. One learner wrote:

“We do not feel safe at school because there are learners who are part of gangs and their [gang] members enter the school during school hours and it affects my education.”

This is a particularly important statement because it challenges the assumption that the school gate necessarily marks a boundary between violence and safety. For this learner, gang violence is not simply something happening outside school. Gang activity is capable of entering the school environment itself.

Another learner wrote:

“Put more police in schools because we’re not safe.”

Another stated:

“He would like to have police around school and hired securities.”

These demands reflect a desire for visible protection for learners. However, they should not be interpreted narrowly as a request simply to place more police officers inside every school. Rather, learners are identifying a need for credible, visible,

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

and responsive safety arrangements around the places and times in which they are most vulnerable. Furthermore, the visibility of policing around school communities must be balanced with not intending to criminalise children.

3.3. **Violence follows learners beyond the school gate**

Learners also described violence in residential areas and on routes to and from school. This matters because the constitutional right to education cannot be meaningfully enjoyed if learners cannot safely reach the place where education is provided.

One learner described the situation in terms of its effect on attendance and examinations:

“When gangs control the streets around schools, attendance drops, exams get missed and trauma becomes norm.”

The statement identifies a chain of harm, including gang control of community spaces, fear, disrupted attendance, missed examinations, trauma and educational disadvantage. This is why the Committee should resist an artificially narrow definition of school safety. A learner does not become safe merely because they have passed through a school gate.

3.4. **Gang violence disrupts education**

Another learner told Parliament:

“It affects our learning and gives us stress and fear of school.”

Another said:

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

“Gang violence affects learners from public schools so I think Parliament can help in being our voice, send a message to the WCED that gang violence affects learners negatively and makes us not be able to attend school sometimes.”

This is central to EE’s submission. The effect of gang violence cannot be measured only through physical injury. Educational disruption is itself an impact of gang violence. When a learner misses class because a shooting has occurred nearby, that learner loses teaching time. Furthermore, when a school closes because of a violent incident, learners lose instructional time. Examination cannot be written safely, the consequences can extend beyond the immediate incident. When learners are frightened or traumatised, their ability to concentrate and participate in learning may be affected. The Committee’s inquiry should therefore recognise educational disruption as a measurable consequence of gang-related crime.

3.5. Learners’ experiences of gang violence

The questionnaire identifies several forms of exposure. Our learner members indicate that they do not only encounter gang violence in and/or around the school community but also extend into their communities.

3.6. Gunshots

Learners reported gunshots near schools and in residential areas.

One learner said:

“Students are not safe, students are innocent people are dying.”

Another wrote:

“They are serial killers, they have no mercy in the community.”

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

The language is powerful because it reflects how violence is perceived by those living within it or experiencing it on a daily basis. For a child, hearing gunfire is not simply a policing statistic. It can create fear about whether they or somebody they know will be the next victim.

3.7. **Gang presence inside schools**

Learners reported that gangs or people associated with gangs can enter school premises.

One learner wrote:

“That there were some gangs that entered our school grounds.”

Another explained:

“People from outside the school enter inside during school hours.”

This raises questions about access control, school security, cooperation between schools and SAPS, and the ability of school safety structures to identify and respond to threats. It also demonstrates why school safety cannot be left exclusively to school principals and teachers. Where gang violence is entrenched in surrounding communities, schools may be exposed to threats they cannot reasonably address without state support.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

3.8. Drugs and drug dealing

Learners repeatedly identified drug dealing near schools as a problem and selected action against drug dealers as one of the interventions the government should prioritise.

One learner stated:

“The act against drug dealers near schools should stop because learners consume drugs and then come to school high and be disrespectful to educators.”

EE believes this response should be approached carefully. The state’s response should distinguish between children who use drugs or are vulnerable to recruitment and those who profit from criminal drug markets. The criminal-justice response should focus on disrupting the supply networks, dealers, and organised criminal structures that create markets around schools. At the same time, learners affected by substance use require appropriate support rather than a response based only on punishment.

4. Constitutional and legal framework

The state’s duty is to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil rights as provided in terms of section 7(2) of the Constitution. Intersectional provisions of the constitution which are fundamental for learner protection include the right to life, inherent dignity and protection against violence. These provisions create an important framework for the gang-violence inquiry. The state’s responsibilities do not arise only after a learner has been shot, injured, or killed. The state has preventative obligations. More importantly, when it relates to learner violence, the state’s duty is elevated to ensure that learners are protected. Where patterns of gang violence are known and where communities and learners repeatedly

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

identify particular risks, government must take reasonable measures to address those risks.

Furthermore, section 12 of the Constitution protects everyone from violence from either public or private sources and safeguards bodily and psychological integrity. For learners living in gang-affected communities, these rights are not abstract. A learner who fears being shot while walking home is experiencing a threat to the right to life and security. A learner who is repeatedly exposed to violence may experience psychological harm. Also, learners who avoid school because of violence may suffer an educational consequence.

The state's response must therefore protect both physical and psychological safety. Section 28: children's rights. Policing and anti-gang strategies affecting communities with large numbers of children must consider children's particular vulnerability. Due to the vulnerability of children, policing and child protection cannot treat children simply as members of the general population. They require specific protection, with specific solutions designed for children.

5. School safety is already a government responsibility

The DBE itself recognises school safety as a government responsibility. The DBE states that it has a partnership with SAPS aimed at linking schools with local police stations and establishing functional School Safety Committees. It also identifies a National School Safety Framework as a management tool for identifying and managing risks and threats of violence in and around schools. The DBE also has a national strategy concerning the prevention and management of alcohol and drug use among learners. Furthermore, the South African Schools Act includes perimeter security among the school infrastructure matters for which national norms and standards are provided. This means that EE is not asking government to invent an entirely new school-safety system. The central problem is implementation, coordination, resourcing and accountability.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Lophumezo Ngcetane.

6. The police constitutional mandate

Section 205(3) of the Constitution states that the objects of the police service include:

- Preventing crime;
- Combating crime;
- Investigating crime;
- Maintaining public order;
- Protecting and securing inhabitants and their property; and
- Upholding and enforcing the law.

Section 206 also gives provinces a role in monitoring police conduct, overseeing police effectiveness and efficiency, promoting police-community relations, and assessing the effectiveness of visible policing. These provisions are directly relevant to learner demands for visible policing. Learners are effectively telling the state: We need the police where we are. The Committee should therefore require evidence that policing strategies are actually aligned with learner movement and school-community risks.

7. Child participation is a legal principle

Learner participation is not simply a good organisational practice. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides in article 12 that children capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in matters affecting them and to have those views given due weight according to age and maturity. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has explained that simply listening to children is insufficient. Their views must be seriously considered and incorporated into decision-making. It has specifically recognised participation in education, situations of violence, and the development of prevention strategies. It is in line with these principles that EE is advancing learner views for this submission.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is even more explicit in the African context. Article 4 provides that, in matters concerning children, their best interests should be the primary consideration, and children capable of communicating their views should have an opportunity to be heard and their views taken into consideration. Article 11 protects the child's right to education. Therefore, when Parliament investigates gang violence affecting children, learner participation should be part of the substance of the inquiry, not merely its procedure.

8. Learner recommendations

Learners were asked what government, and police should do to better protect them from gang violence. Their responses point to a multi-dimensional solution.

8.1. Increased police visibility

Learners repeatedly selected increased police visibility around schools. This demand has deep roots in EE's organising.

In 2017, learners from Gugulethu and Khayelitsha marched to a police station demanding police visibility in the mornings and afternoons when they travelled to and from school. They also demanded action against drug dealing near school premises. The same year, thousands of people joined an EE-led march to Parliament demanding safer schools, with learners calling for policing in gang hotspots and visible policing at the times when school starts and finishes. The continuity between the 2017 demands and the 2026 questionnaire is striking. Learners are still advancing the same challenges that were encountered by learners for the past decade.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

8.2. Additional school safety officers and strengthening school safety committees

Learners also called for additional school safety personnel. Every school identified as a gang-violence hotspot should have a functional school safety committee.

One learner wrote:

“Government shall make sure that all schools are surrounded by law enforcement or securities during dismissal time ... because gangsters are shooting sometimes late in the day.”

8.3. Removing illegal firearms

Learners selected the removal of illegal firearms as an intervention. EE supports this demand. The constitutional duty of the police to prevent, combat and investigate crime and protect inhabitants must be understood alongside the need for effective firearm control and investigation. The Committee itself has identified firearms as central to the gang-violence problem and has raised concerns about the handling of seized firearms and ammunition.

EE therefore recommends that firearm interventions be measured not only by the number of firearms seized but by:

- Firearm tracing;
- Successful linkage to criminal cases;
- Removal of illegal firearms from gang networks;
- Prosecution of firearm-related offences;
- Reductions in shootings around schools and learner routes.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhobo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Lophumezo Ngcetane.

8.4. Safer routes to school

Learners selected improved street lighting and safer routes to school. This is essential. A school cannot be considered safe if the streets immediately surrounding it are unsafe. The state should identify routes regularly used by learners and assess the following:

- Streetlights;
- Pedestrian safety;
- Police visibility;
- Abandoned or dangerous spaces.

8.5. Psychosocial support

EE recognises that violence has an effect on learner mental well-being. Accordingly, every learner who encounters violence, directly or indirectly, must be afforded psychosocial support services. Furthermore, EE has argued that physical security must be accompanied by psychosocial support, functional school safety structures and coordination between government departments. This is especially important because the learner feedback demonstrates that violence produces fear and stress. A learner who witnesses or repeatedly experiences violence may require support even if they have not sustained a physical injury.

Psychosocial support should be understood not only as a response to violence after it occurs but also as a preventative intervention that strengthens learners' cognitive and emotional resilience to navigate the conditions that contribute to gang involvement. Accessible, well-resourced psychosocial support programmes and personnel can play an important preventative role by helping learners process trauma, develop healthy coping mechanisms, and seek assistance before distress escalates into disengagement, violence, or harmful behaviour.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlehabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Lophumezo Ngcetane.

8.6. Community-school cooperation

Learners also identified cooperation between communities and schools. This is important because gang violence is embedded in broader community conditions. EE has previously emphasised that threats within communities can spill into schools and that there is an intrinsic connection between community conditions and school violence. DBE, DSD, municipalities and police need to work together to address gang violence affecting learners. This should inform the committee's whole-of-government approach in addressing community violence, including gang violence.

8.7. Develop school-hotspot policing plans

SAPS should identify schools situated in gang-affected areas and develop localised safety plans.

Each plan should identify:

- gang hotspots;
- Firearm hotspots;
- Drug-selling points;
- Routes used by learners;
- Times when learners are most exposed;
- Communication channels between schools and police; and
- Responsible SAPS officials.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlehabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

8.8. Child-sensitive policing

Police officers working in school hotspots should receive training on:

- Children's rights;
- Trauma-informed engagement;
- Child-sensitive interviewing;
- Gang recruitment;
- Substance use;
- Safeguarding;
- Confidentiality; and
- Referral to psychosocial services.

8.9. Strengthen school–police communication

Every identified hotspot school should have a clearly identified SAPS contact. EE supports meaningful community participation in policing. Section 206 of the Constitution recognises the importance of police-community relations and provides provinces with a role in promoting those relations and assessing visible policing.

Schools should know:

- Who to contact;
- How to report an emergency;
- How information will be handled;
- What response time can reasonably be expected; and
- How follow-up will occur.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Mothlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlekhabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Lumphumezo Ngcetane.

8.10. Strengthen implementation of the National School Safety Framework

The DBE working along SAPS in accordance with the School Safety Protocol should assess implementation of the National School Safety Framework in gang-affected schools. It should publish:

- Implementation rates;
- School safety committee functionality;
- School safety plan compliance;
- Security infrastructure compliance;
- Incidents reporting;
- Referrals;
- Learner participation; and
- Psychosocial-support access.

8.11. Conduct a national study of school violence

EE recommends an updated national study of school violence, with a dedicated focus on:

- Gang violence;
- Drug markets;
- Extortion affecting schools, including early childhood development centres;
- Firearm violence;
- Learner recruitment into gangs;
- Violence on routes to school;
- psychosocial consequences; and
- Learner perceptions of safety.

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlehabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

8.12. Accountability and coordination

The state already recognises that school safety requires coordination. The DBE describes its partnership with SAPS as intended to connect schools with local police stations and establish functional school safety committees. The problem identified by learners is therefore not necessarily the complete absence of policy.

It is the gap between the following:

Policy, implementation, lived experience.

A learner does not experience the state as separate departments. A learner experiences:

“Is my school safe?”

The state must therefore organise itself around the learner’s experience rather than around institutional boundaries.

9. Conclusion

For ten years, learners have told the government that unsafe communities produce unsafe schools. We have marched, conducted research, spoken to police, spoken to education departments, gone to Parliament, documented unsafe experiences, and now, in 2026, we are turning to Parliament for safety for our learners.

Every learner has the right to basic education. Every child has the right to protection from violence and abuse. Every person has the right to life, dignity, freedom, and security. The state must respect, protect, promote, and fulfil these rights. The police must prevent, combat,

National Council: Mbekezeli Benjamin (*Chair*), Itumeleng Motlabane, Nontsikelelo Dlulani, Masechaba Ntsane, Nomhlehabo Masondo, Zamaswazi Madonsela, Sifiso Mthabela, Dineo Mogadime, Sesule Magwaza, Siyabulela Ncetani, Luyanda Dladla, Kholeka Mbalo, Edna Gubula, Khanyisile Mkhize, Athabo Somazembe, Yenzeka Shabalala, Katlego Sekhaolelo, Emihle Tima, Thandeka Mkhwanazi, Luphumezo Ngcetane.

and investigate crime and protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic. These obligations do not disappear because violence occurs in a poor or historically marginalised community. Nor should the burden of solving gang violence be placed on learners, teachers, or schools. The responsibility belongs to the state, acting collectively and accountably. EE therefore calls on Parliament to ensure that its response to gang-related violence does not measure success only by what happens after violence occurs. The Committee must ask what can be done before a learner is shot, before a school closes, before an examination is missed, before a child is recruited, and before trauma becomes normal. Lastly, the Committee must ask itself whether learners can safely walk to school.