



MY DISTRICT TODAY

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The Fight Against Substance Abuse

Compiled by: Matshidiso Mokoka, GCIS – Mohlakeng Thusong Service Centre

The complexity of the drug and alcohol abuse problem in the country demands a coordinated and highly integrated approach if the goal of creating a drug-free society is to be achieved. The Department of Social Development is the lead government department responsible for implementing the National Drug Master Plan (NMDP, 2006 – 2011), which serves as a blue print of national action and directs programmes to stamp out drug abuse and deal with the associated challenges. The NMDP commits government and sectors of society to work together to reduce the demand and supply of illegal drugs through a wide range of coordinated action from national to local levels.

In response to this, the GCIS Gauteng and the Kagiso Community Development Workers partnered with stakeholders from Lifeline, health promoters, Carroll Shaw Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre and Built the Nation Trauma Centre in February 2012, to conduct a Substance Abuse Roadshow. This was done through visits to various schools in Kagiso. Presentations were conducted during Life Orientation classes, on the dangers and effects of drug and alcohol abuse. Seven secondary schools were visited during this roadshow.

Kagiso is a township in Krugersdorp that has a prevalence of youth as young as 12 years old that are addicted to a drug called Nyaope. Nyaope is a deadly mix of dagga and cheap heroin, which is becoming

the drug of choice among the youth in South Africa. More and more teenagers in townships are getting hooked on the drug.

Recovering addicts from the Carroll Shaw Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre made a great impact on learners as they emphasised the dangers of drugs such Nyaope to a person's body and how it changes people's lives.

"Getting into drugs is very easy because they are available on every street corner. But deciding to leave them is never easy. Going through withdrawal symptoms is very hard as you always get painful stomach cramps," said Bonolo Mogapi, a recovering addict.

Another recovering addict, Dingaan Magafujana, said, "Drug addicts, especially those using Nyaope, will do anything to get a "fix". Some resort to a life of crime to enable them to buy the drugs. Family lives are destroyed because addicted children will start stealing from inside the home before they resort to stealing from strangers. They will steal TV sets and other appliances and sell them for next to nothing just to get the money for drugs."

Lifeline, a nationwide organisation active also in Krugersdorp used this roadshow to encourage learners to start making use of their services for counselling and referrals if they become victims of substance abuse.



Learners at Bosele Intermediate School during the Substance Abuse Roadshow

Thuli Mpanza from Lifeline said, "Remember that if you are an addict, there is no one who will force you to quit. It has to be a personal decision. As an individual it is up to you to take care of your emotional wellbeing and taking drugs is not an answer to that."



Dingaan from Carroll Shaw Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre during Life Orientation classes at Thathulwazi Secondary School

Lifeline national counselling line: 0861 322 322

Government ups interaction with communities

Compiled by: Estella Naicker

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Utrecht – In a bid to increase citizens' awareness of its programmes and to foster a culture of participation, government, through its office bearers, is embarking on a series of engagement seminars with communities around the country.

A visit by the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Mr Gugile Nkwinti, to the Amajuba District on Friday 9 March 2012, where he spearheaded a seminar at the Emadlangeni Town Hall was welcomed by citizens in the area.

Many people said that they finally felt more like active participants than just spectators to decisions taken by government.

The seminar, one of 30 that will take place throughout the country, forms part of a communication strategy adopted by Cabinet to host regular meetings between leaders of government and the citizens.

The seminar is similar to the one, which was led by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Richard Baloyi, in the Waterberg District in Limpopo.

"The sessions are intended to help citizens understand the decisions that are taken by government and how it will benefit their lives," explained Michael Currin, Chief Director: Provincial Coordination and Programme Support at the Government Communication and Information System.

While the seminar in Amajuba was intended to communicate the Government's Programme of Action that follows the President's State of the Nation Address (SoNA), attendees took full advantage of the opportunity to raise issues, demand answers and even offer solutions to common problems.

"Not only do I understand the SoNA a little better, but having the Minister come all the way to Utrecht to talk to us showed me that government really cares about us, even though we live in a rural area," said Elizabeth Malinga, a beneficiary of a land claim.



Ian de Jager, a farmer in the area, said he already had a good grasp of the SoNA but still felt that the seminar was useful in making Minister Nkwinti aware of issues relevant to the area.

"One of the more salient issues that was raised at the seminar is the fact that land reform needs to be done in such a manner that it gives people ownership with a sense of responsibility, and people must feel the full onus of that responsibility. It is very easy to transfer land but if it is not managed properly, it is a waste," said De Jager.

He continued: "There was also one gentleman from Newcastle who said he had a group that was willing to offer hands-on training in farming to individuals, in conjunction with the training being offered at a tertiary institution, but the Minister explained that the vehicle to drive that programme forward was not entirely in place.

"There are many stakeholders that are willing to participate ... more needs to be done in a constructive manner, and funds need to be allocated appropriately."

During the seminar the MEC for Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, Dr Meshack Radebe, dissuaded citizens from "always blaming government for their problems."

"We will reap what we sow and if you do not plant, you cannot grow," he said, encouraging citizens to take responsibility for their own futures.

He went on to explain that just as President Jacob Zuma announced that 2011 was the year for creat-

ing jobs, 2012 would be the year for infrastructure development.

"People say there is a difference between the two but it is actually one thing," said Dr Radebe.

"Infrastructure development creates the opportunity for people to invest. We have learnt from the Soccer World Cup and we are now calling upon the public sector, the private sector and parastatals to invest in infrastructure. This will generate huge opportunities for South African businesses."

Minister Nkwinti touched on the *Green Paper on Land Reform* when he took to the podium, saying the aim of the document was to unite municipalities, communities, the police, farm workers and farm owners to solve problems either socially or legally.

"It puts a measure of power both in the hands of the worker and in the hands of the farmer," he said.

"The reason we have giants and dwarfs in this country can be traced back to land. The giants have land. Eighteen years after democracy, people are still marching in the streets with fake machine guns and it is not right. People don't know how to respect property because they don't have property," he concluded.

After the seminar, guests said they wished for more discussion time to be allocated in the programme.

Minister Nkwinti will return to the Amajuba District on 22 March, when further discussions are expected to take place.

