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 blueprint 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.”

Lifeline national counselling line: 0861 322 322
Government ups interaction with communities

Compiled by: Estella Naicker

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 Emadalangeni 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.

“The reason we have giants and dwarfs in this country can be traced back to land. The giants have land. Everyone for themselves, not for the worker and in the hands of the farmer,” he said.

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 creating 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 brings 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.

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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.