

# SOUTH AFRICA

## Raising Awareness About the Impact of Drug-Abuse in Schools and the Role of School Based Youth Clubs in Reducing the Problem

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### 1. Frame of reference

According to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the purpose of education is to foster development of the child personality, talent, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential to prepare him/her for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality and friendship among all people.

Drug Abuse in South African schools is considered as one of the biggest health and social challenges facing learners/youth. Information on this has been collected in South Africa by various Researchers in research councils, like Medical Research Council, Human Sciences Research Council and the Centre for Alcohol and Drug Studies

One of the causes of drug abuse such as dagga and others may be due to an increase to travel in South Africa as results of tourism and trade links. This put pressure on the youth of South Africa especially school learners who find themselves vulnerable to drugs. As a result, learners in Clocolan become affected by this process. Affected learners are a threat to both educators and other learners.

Young school learners (in Clocolan) access dagga easily as a result of the proximity (45km) from Lesotho to Clocolan. Most Lesotho nationals are known to be trading with dagga. Bullying, gender violence, poor performance, poor attendance, lack of in-

terest in learning, late coming and an increase in learner drop out is as a result of drug abuse in schools. Learners are the future of the country and must be presented with opportunities that will help them to grow as responsible participating citizens.

## 2. Purpose

- To create a conducive environment of learning that is safe and free from drugs and all forms of substance abuse. In this type of environment the school will be child friendly and cater for the three Ps (i.e. participation, provision and protection) of CRC
- To engage BEM/GEM, Soul Buddies and other youth Clubs in school to assist in the attainment of the above mentioned environment and also to create awareness amongst learners and the school community about CRC and problems relating to drug abuse.
- The Involvement of the entire learner population in dialogue around the disadvantages of drug abuse will be of importance as it will help in making them realize the dangers of drug abuse.
- To raise awareness about the legal implications of drug abuse.
- To develop collaboration with different departments and make use of relevant national and provincial programmes in addressing the problem

## 3. Intended outcomes and output

- Increased learner participation in the classrooms will result in the improved performance and reduction in dropout rate of learners
- Mass participation of learners in different sporting activities will change their behavior and attitudes towards their performance
- Collaboration with other sister departments (South African Police Services, Health and Social Development), NGOs (Love life), SBST (School Based Support Team), Inclusive Education, SYRAC (Sports, Youth Recreation, Arts and Culture) and involvement of parents will assist in the reduction of drug abuse in the school.

## 4. Methodology/Activities

ACTIVITY	SERVICE PROVIDER	BENEFICIARIES	PURPOSE	DATE
Meeting with district management team	Change agents	Management team	Informed the district about CRC and the project	21/01/2012
Meeting with SMT, Staff, Life Orientation educators, School Based Support Team and School Governing Body	Change agents	Stakeholders	Informed the stakeholders about CRC and the project	28/01/2012
Meeting with Love Life, South African Police Services, Health Dept. And inclusive education	Change agents	Stakeholders	Inform the stakeholders about CRC and the project	07 /02/2012
Baseline study Awareness campaign on drugs and alcohol abuse	Inclusive education South African Breweries Love Life	Learners	Questionnaire Make learners aware about the danger of drug abuse(role play and worksop)	07/02/2012
Meeting with RCL (representative Council of learners) (BEM/GEM(Boys Empowerment Movement/ Girls empowerment Movement Soul Buddy's and community shepherds	Change agents	Learners		23/02/2012
Drama competitions	Arts and Culture educators	Learners	Expression of views	14/03/2012
Health Month	Health Dept.	Learners	Check learners health	02-16/08/2012
Prayer day	Pastor	Learners	Spiritual motivation	23/07/ 2012
Cleaning campaign	Learners and Educators	The township and old aged home	Provide service to the community	27/07/2012
Life in prison	Prison officials	Learners	Create awareness	08/08/2012
Prayer day	Women from different churches	Learners	Spiritual motivation	10/09/2012
Allocation of duties to learners	Change agents	Learners	Learner participation	19/09/2012
RADS (Radically Different Species) workshop	Inclusive Education officials	Learners and Educators	Awareness about HIV/AIDS, Study skills, numeracy and involvement in community projects	23-26/09/2012

Awareness about quality learning and teaching	QLTC(Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign) and Values in Education officials	Learners	Awareness about education as a basic right	26/09/2012
Children's parliament	Legislature	Learners	Presentations and debate concerning children's rights	28/09/2012
Meeting with all stakeholders	Change agents	Stakeholders	Their contribution on the programme	18/10/2012
Mentor Bodil's visit	SBST(School based support team), Bodil and change agents	Learners and other stakeholders	Communicated with the SMT, Staff members, School Governing Body, School Quality Learning & teaching committee and all learners including youth clubs.	07-09/11/2012
Information session about careers	Gender Department	Grade 8 and eleven learners	Empowered grade 8 and eleven BEM/ GEM learners about careers	27/10/2012
Motivation of learners	South African Broadcasting Services	Grade 11 and 12 learners	Learner motivation and information about careers	10/01/2013
Information session	Department of Arts and Culture	Social sciences learners Grade8-11	Careers available in Social Sciences Subjects	01/02/2013
RCL training	Private leadership trainers	RCL members	Equip RCL with leadership skills	26-28/02/2013
3 <sup>rd</sup> National school Moot court workshop(mock court)	Values in Education	Learners	Develop learners on their rights and responsibilities	27/02/2013

Meeting with Love Life, SAPS (South African Police Services), Health Dept. and Inclusive Education representation



Learner participation in youth parliament



South African Breweries' awareness campaign



## Visit to old aged home



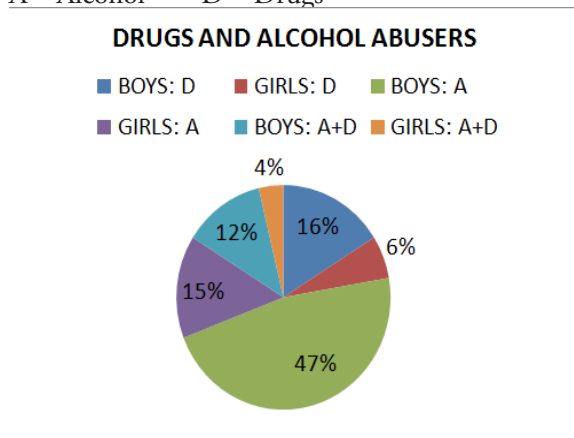
## 5. Baseline

In order to get information about the level of drug and alcohol abuse in Clocolan schools, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to two primary schools and two Secondary schools. Thirty learners were randomly selected per category as follows:

- Kgutliso Primary School – Grade 7 (30 learners)- 15 boys and 15 girls
- Hlohlolwane Primary School – Grade 7 (30 learners) -15 boys and 15 girls
- Tshepang Secondary School – Grade 10 (30 learners)- 15 boys and 15 girls
- Clocolan Secondary School – Grade 10 (30 learners)- 15 boys and 15 girls

The results were as indicated in the pie chart below.

A = Alcohol      D = Drugs



## 6. Results (What has been achieved?)

Different intervention strategies were put into action, particularly at Tshepang Secondary school as indicated in the activities table. As we started the project, learners showed keen interest in it. They were always positive about what to contribute to make a project successful. Other stakeholders also showed interest in the project and indicated that they are willing to assist the school as far as possible. Learners were involved and participated in different activities like drama competitions, speak out competitions, chess, Boxing, football, netball and other activities organised by the provincial and national departments.

Through the project the school identified that learners who were mostly troublesome and involved in dagga were over aged. Through inclusive education an initiative was taken to refer them to Adult centres and Further Education and Training Colleges.

The involvement of learners in different sporting activities has changed their behaviour and attitude tremendously. The school is gradually becoming child friendly and the needs of learners are addressed on daily basis. For example girls are provided with sanitary towels, uniform banking is introduced, the SBST is providing needy learners with take home food parcels; assist them with Identity documents, birth certificates and social grants.

The project also attracted different departments to educate learners on various challenges affecting them on daily basis. e.g. SAPS – on women and children abuse, SABC-education and careers etc. Parents are gradually taking responsibility in the education of their children and assist the school in shaping and moulding their children's behaviour.

The visit by our mentor Bodil played an important role in shaping the behaviour and attitude of our learners especially after the strike that impacted negatively to the smooth running of the school. To them it was a privilege to be addressed, heard and have communication with someone from abroad (Sweden). To the educators it was an embarrassment to hear what learners are saying about them.

After Bodil left we then had a meeting with educators whereby educators who were present in the discussions with learners gave feedback to those who were not present. Everybody started reflecting on that. It was then the feeling of most staff members that educators should be careful about what they say to learners, how they behave and how they should treat them. On the other hand educators also suggested that learners should also respect them because they are also suffering humiliation and disrespect from some of the learners. Concerns from educators were communicated with youth clubs and that received a positive response. As we indicated earlier, the school is in the process of becoming child friendly. This cannot be achieved in one day, but we are working towards that positive environment.

## 7. Discussion and Reflection

The Rights of Children are enshrined in the South African Constitution and are also infused in the Curriculum but unfortunately some of the educators do not take them seriously. Through this project educators and parents are gradually becoming aware of Children's Rights and take these rights into consideration. Different stakeholders support them (parents and educators) in their endeavours to recognise these Rights.

The project initially started well with some few challenges here and there. Parents and other stakeholders were very critical when the team outlined children's rights as contained in the Child Rights Convention handbook. In South Africa it is difficult to mention rights without linking them with responsibilities. On the other hand the strike that took place between May-September 2012 bore unintended results on the project and as a result it was to a large extent disturbed.

In the past the school had a number of cases where learners were referred to rehabilitation centres due to drug abuse, but since the implementation of this project numbers are decreasing. The number of learners abusing drugs has significantly decreased by 2%. Information has been obtained from School Based Support Team statistics

Despite the achievements we have indicated, we still have cases of drug abuse, boys bullying girls, humiliation and disrespect of educators by some of the learners and some parents who are sceptical about children's' rights. To some parents rights is something spoiling the behaviour of their children.

## 8. Way forward

- The team will still continue with the project because drug trafficking in the area poses a serious threat to learner community.
- Intensify participation of youth clubs in different activities
- Promotion of the rights of learners inside and outside the classroom will be a priority
- To ensure that Tshepang Secondary becomes a caring and child friendly learning environment.
- Through the project we are aiming to expand CRC to neighbouring schools



## 9. Conclusion

The project strengthened our school based support team to a larger extent. The three Ps of CRC are addressed in most of the activities and we will intensify them adequately. As the team we salute the International programme on the rights of children.

## 10. Reference

- CRC (Implementation handbook p.420)
- SA Constitution (Act 108 of 1996)
- Drug Trafficking Act No. 140 of 1992
- Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse
- Treatment Dependency Act No. 20 of 1992.
- The policy of the Department of Education

