



# anecc

activists networking against the exploitation of children

## **Youth conference**

The youth conference entitled: "working together today for solidarity tomorrow: promoting partnership between stakeholders to improve services to youth," took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009 at the Beaufort West Youth Outreach Centre. The youth conference attempted to bring together all the partners, namely the Community Development Workers, Department of Social Development Youth Workers and other partner civil society organisations working with youth, to put in place a strategy to increase outreach and improve services to youth. The conference was purposefully held during the period of the 16 days of activism on violence against women and children, to educate youth delegates of the importance of period and to highlight the plight of young people in the district who face violence on an on going basis to delegates from partner organisations.

Conference delegates included atleast two youth representatives from the following towns: Laingsburg, Prince Albert, Leeu Gamka, Merweville, Nelspoort and Beaufort West which were transported and accommodated by the organisation. In total there were 14 youth members, of which 9 were female and 5 were male, 13 coloured youth members and 1 black individual. In total, there were 33 members in attendance at the conference.

The conference was also attended by delegates from the Children's Resource Centre from Cape Town who gave valuable input throughout the conference. Local partner delegates included the Volunteer Centre, the Community Development Workers, BADISA, NICRO, Association for Persons with Disabilities and the Karoo Gender Education Programme. Presentations were delivered by numerous organisations on the first on their roles in the Central Karoo in terms of youth and their intended programmes for 2010.

Task teams consisting of a mix of youth and partners worked in groups in order to address the questions of how services could be coordinated to extend outreach; what services were lacking for youth and the key factors that were inhibiting the development of youth in the Central Karoo. The tasks teams also worked together to develop a plan of action for 2010 in order to ensure the increased services to youth and their access thereof, to ensure the sustainability of this action plan, all delegates signed a pledge.

The key issues highlighted by conference delegates are summarised below:

- Lack of motivation, participation and interest from youth in their well being, futures and the services available to them (they have become apathetic)
- There is lack of resources available to youth based initiatives and the information that is relevant to youth is poorly distributed
- Youth are made aware of their rights but rarely of their responsibilities, service providers and youth groups should focus on this in their work
- Lack of safe, recreational spaces where youth are able to engage in positive extracurricular activities.
- There are no platforms for those youth to participate and have their “say”, also they can not learn from older and experienced individuals in their community
- Lack of appropriate leaders to act as examples and mentors

In response to the issues highlighted above, delegates used their working groups to put together a plan of action. The actions devised are realistic and practical, ensuring that both youth delegates and delegates from partner organisations will be able to contribute.

### **-Forming Youth Forums**

- How: youth members, groups, government departments and civil society organisations slot into the existing Youth Discussion forum being held at the Youth Outreach Center. Conference delegates commit at conference to attending the YDF on a monthly basis and through their networks introduce and encourage relevant stakeholders to attend. Youth in other areas should be given the opportunity to attend a YDF so that they can replicate it in their own towns, through the support of organisations and government departments at a local level.

-Outcome: The commission questions of “What services are lacking” and “what are the roles of youth to protect their rights and those of their peers” are discussed at a local level on a larger scale so that we may address the issues of the apathy of youth and the decentralization of youth services.

-A district youth council may be formed, representing that which has been envisioned by local government, hopefully with the intention of having their buy in.

-Reporting on discussions and agreements from the youth conference

-How: each individual will receive a summary and report on the conference by January 30, 2010. They shall use this to communicate the outcomes of the conference at a local level. Youth will share the information with other youth e.g. making a presentation in their classes. Youth will also go and see their local NGO’s, CBO’s etc informing them of what took place. NGO members will report back to their structures and investigate how conference findings can be incorporated into project plans for

2010. Those organisations or departments that have outreach throughout the district should disseminate information so that it does not lie within one person.

-Presentations at the MSET meetings and encourage other holders to participate in key actions

-Outcomes: Strategies that come out of the conference are shared with youth and stakeholders throughout the Central Karoo even though they were not in attendance.

-Information sharing ensures that there is increased efficacy of Strategies

### **-Placing pressure of leaders and public figures to act as appropriate examples**

-How: youth write letters to their local public figures whether being a church leader, municipal manager or school teacher, raising their concern about the status of youth and their lack of responsibility encouraging these leaders to engage more with youth so that may have tangible role models

-Present stakeholders help facilitate opportunities for youth to come into contact with well respected public leaders

-Outcomes: public leaders become more aware of their responsibilities as role models

- Youth can begin model positive behaviour and responsibilities

### **-Commitment of youth and stakeholders to submit relevant information to the Anex M.U.se newsletter**

- How: - Youth make submissions in the form of activity reports, poems and short stories to newsletter

- Stakeholders and partners submit important, relevant information concerning youth, they also encourage youth involved in their own programmes to make submissions to the newsletter

-Make use of GCIS network and other networks

-Outcomes: - information regarding youth is distributed to youth, information is relevant and has youth input, creating a platform as well as an information portal that is accessible for youth

## **BASIBAMBANE ART EXHIBITION**

The week following up to the conference, workshops were held with the youth of Beaufort West on the history behind the 16 days of activism and its correlation to violence. The workshops made use art as a medium for the youth to present their interpretations of the violence perpetrated in their communities. These art works then went on exhibition at the Beaufort West Youth Outreach Centre for one prior to the conference and during the conference also. Therefore the exhibition will run from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of December and will be entitled the “Basibambane” or “Let’s hold hands” to fight violence in our communities. A total of 35 people attended the opening which was done by Mayor Juliet Jonas of Beaufort West.

The Basibambane art exhibition highlighted that violence is perpetrated against women of all ages and those who bare the consequences are the young people and children living in these communities.

The art work has been retained and will be reused in the future to create awareness around the prevalence of violence in the communities in the Central Karoo and the effects it has victims.