Alcohol and Substance Abuse – Community Challenges

Below is a list of community challenges related to alcohol and substance abuse that were raised in a university-community workshop that was help between SU and ABBA network at the Stellenbosch Lodge on Friday 06th June 2014.

The issue of alcohol and substance abuse was recognised as one of the most pressing challenges facing our communities in the Western Cape Province and the wine lands district of South Africa where Stellenbosch University is situated.

This is a call to university staff and students involved or interested in researching Alcohol and Substance Abuse to please also consider the below challenges facing our local community.

Communication is key. There is a lack of communication around alcohol and drug issues. More activism is needed around drug outlets, law enforcement, the legal system and the coordination of activities. Policies are not effectively enforced. Early interventions need to take place with children as alcohol and drug use starts as young as six years old. Better networking between all stakeholders is also critical.

Information about all aspects is needed. Sometime where intervention agencies or services are available, there is a stigma attached to using them. One also needs to address and educate parents as there is apathy.

There is also a skewed perception of the role and scope of the available services. For instance, parents will drop their children of at ABBA and expect ABBA to deal with and heal them. The parents do not realise that they have to be part of the treatment process. There
is often also disappointment on the part of clients because they think an intervention agency or service will be a quick fix solution.

There is a **high incidence of rape** over weekends

People don’t want to admit there is a problem

**Services** need to coordinate and collaborate. Services are disconnected from each other.

A **drug master plan** is necessary for the coordination of services.

There needs to be **psycho-education interventions** for all involved, including family members. Intervention agencies such as Alcoholics Anonymous and others need to have a presence in communities. Referral agents also need education.

There are **barriers to using treatment agencies**, such as long waiting lists at centres and a lack of affordability.

There are also **co-morbidity health issues** which lead to confusion as to which health issue needs to be addressed first. Responsibility gets shifted in this scenario.

**After care services** are lacking.

More support systems are needed such as **mothers support groups and after outpatient treatment**.

FAS screening happens late

People with **addictions are stigmatised** and treated contemptuously in the health care system.

**Tik use is a big problem** as are unregistered shebeens, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, prescription drug misuse and family violence.

**Stellenbosch University students are also a problem** because they abuse alcohol and also misuse the time of the SAPS.

**Pro-Social behaviour and activities need to be encouraged and created.** There are no activities or positive influences as an alternative to alcohol and substance use and abuse.
There needs to be resources in communities, such as libraries, playgrounds, sport, city planning, etc. **There is a lack of parenting skills and supervision of children**, so these need to be developed.

There is a need for: parenting groups and parenting training workshops; the training and availability of community workers; recreational activities; the rehabilitation of criminals; more crèches.

There is a need to: address issues affecting youth; develop internal and external motivations; impact the **values of children under the age of six years**.

Community workers and communities need to break the entrenched cycle of and change the culture of alcohol use; support schools on these issues and work with the SAPS.