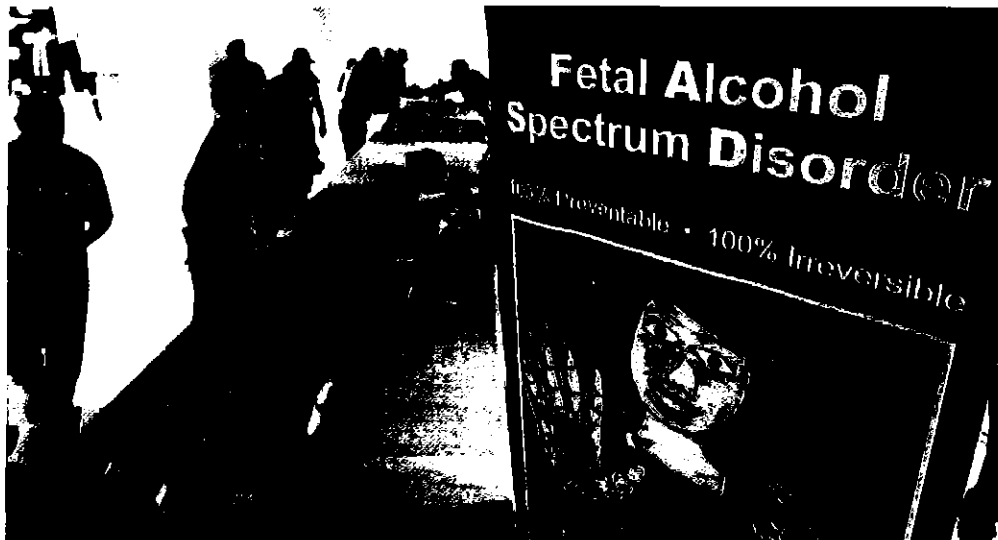


New initiative to tackle Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

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The department hoped to develop more programmes to target specifically the youth. Picture: David Ritchie

Cape Town - A groundbreaking youth development initiative has been launched by Western Cape Social Development MEC Albert Fritz.

The initiative uses the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) to boost the fight against Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) along the West Coast.

The Department is working closely with Landbou Gemeenskap Ontwikkeling (LGO). In April it provided funding for 15 EPWP posts.

LGO has also used its resources to train 15 youth and deploy them as community workers into the farming communities on the West Coast.

They work under the supervision of the LGO social worker and Its Farmer committee. The community workers focus on areas like public education, school holiday programs, leadership development and

Anti-FASD programs.

The partnership will also see the department's local offices in the region work closely with the LGO, to provide social work resources, such as child protection and early childhood development services, to tackle other social problems.

A recent study found a high prevalence of FASD on the West Coast with 64 children per 1000 affected.

Other studies found high rates in Kimberley (60/1000) and in the Witzenberg area (96/1000). But the highest rate is 122/1000 in De Aar which is the highest reported rate of FASD in the world.

The West Coast's prevalence rate indicates that there is a serious problem with FASD in this area, and the impact of this could be felt throughout its communities.

"FASD poses a major challenge to the development of children and, later, adults," LGO head manager Johan van de Hoven said. "I am proud of the partnership with the Department, as it brings social services closer to communities."

Fritz also reiterated his commitment to providing opportunities for the youth.

"We will continue the fight against FASD and all other forms of substance abuse. Empowering young people to take the lead is central this objective. This is why DSD spends R112 million jointly on the Youth and Substance Abuse Programmes, which provide services that tackle drug and alcohol abuse, and create social and economic opportunities for young people," Fritz said.

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