



Participant with posters depicting messages warning against the harmful effects of alcohol use during pregnancy.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder highest in SA

► Chriszanne Janse van Vuuren

Local stakeholders recently gathered with the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) project team at Angel Park in Caledon Street, Graaff-Reinet, to mark International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Day, celebrated worldwide on 9 September each year.

This global event aims to raise awareness about FASD and promote the prevention message.

FASD represents the leading cause of permanent mental disability globally, with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) being its most severe form.

It affects people across all cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. Shockingly, South Africa bears the highest reported FASD prevalence rates globally, reaching 28 - 31% in certain communities, and an estimated 11% nationwide (*WHO*

report, 2018). Leana Olivier, CEO of the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR), emphasises the magnitude of the FASD problem in South Africa and its global significance.

While progress has been made since FARR's establishment in 1997 and efforts by various NGOs, much remains to be done to ensure access to information,

services and support for individuals, families and communities affected by FASD. This year, FARR launched the *Beyond all limits* campaign, encouraging

individuals and communities to support and care for those impacted by FASD.

The campaign began two weeks before International FASD Day, involving stakeholders from the Department of Health, Justice, Social Development, and NGOs in Graaff-Reinet.

Project staff also conducted home visits in various communities. On the day itself,

clients, supporters, and stakeholders gathered for an event near the FARR office. Reverend Frans Booysen opened with a prayer, followed by a display of handmade posters conveying messages about the dangers of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and its link to FASD.

Passers-by appreciated the demonstration, which allowed for interaction and the crucial FASD prevention message: No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy. FARR expressed gratitude to aware.org for funding the project.

FARR operates 13 community project sites across several South African provinces, including the Graaff-Reinet hub and Spoke Project in the Eastern Cape. This initiative encompasses towns like Nieu-Bethesda and Middelburg, with its hub in Graaff-Reinet. The project team, consisting of only four staff members, serves this vast area.

For further information about the project, contact Abelene Goliath at graaff-reinet@farrsa.org.za or on 064 060 8059.

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