

BRANDSTORIES»»»

INTERNATIONAL FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER DAY 9 September

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Aware.org and FARR's partnership targets FASD prevention in SA

SOUTH Africa faces a significant challenge with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) – a condition that is completely preventable yet alarmingly prevalent in the country.

Although research has not been conducted in all 9 provinces, South Africa is estimated to have a national prevalence rate of 11.1% – but rates as high as 31% have been reported, which is the highest reported rate globally.

FASD is caused by alcohol exposure during pregnancy, leading to lifelong physical and cognitive impairments in affected individuals. Despite these severe consequences, the level of awareness about FASD remains inadequate among young people, underage mothers, communities, fathers and healthcare providers.

Support and resources

In response to this crisis, Aware.org has joined forces with the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR)

to spearhead critical initiatives aimed at preventing FASD. This partnership focuses on educating and equipping society with the knowledge and resources to avoid alcohol use during pregnancy; employing a comprehensive whole-of-society approach.

As part of these efforts, Aware.org and FARR have implemented a hub-and-spoke programme in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape, while also commissioning a FASD prevalence study in the Free State that commenced in 2023 and is still in progress.

These programmes are designed to enhance local capacities to address FASD by providing community-based support and resources to effectively prevent the disorder. The hub-and-spoke model ensures a broad reach for tailored interventions, addressing specific needs within each province.

“Aware.org is committed to addressing the high rate of FASD in South Africa through strategic

partnerships like with FARR. Our goal is to one day see that every child has the best possible start in life, free from the harms of prenatal alcohol exposure,” says Mokebe Thulo, CEO at Aware.org.

Dr Leana Olivier, CEO of FARR, highlights the significance of this collaboration. “Through our joint efforts, we are making significant strides in reducing the incidence of FASD. By empowering expectant mothers with the right information and support, we can help prevent this preventable disorder.”

Healthier future

The impact of these efforts is underscored by the testimony of a beneficiary of the Healthy Mother Healthy Baby (HMHB) programme.

“Through the HMHB programme, my child is now healthy and thriving. I've quit alcohol altogether. I'm overjoyed for my healthy child, yet deeply saddened by what my first one had

farr foundation for alcohol related research

A child WITH FASD

needs

- Routine
- Structure
- Patience
- Understanding
- Love

has

- Potential
- Hopes
- Dreams
- Love to give!

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to go through,” said the mother.

Together, Aware.org and FARR are dedicated to creating a healthier future for South African communities by raising awareness and preventing the devastating impacts of FASD. Their joint efforts aim not only to reduce the prevalence of FASD, but to

also foster a culture of informed decision-making – ensuring that future generations are born free from the consequences of prenatal alcohol exposure. This partnership is a powerful step towards breaking the cycle of FASD and building a brighter, healthier future for all.

BASA drives awareness about dangers of underage drinking

SOUTH Africa has one of the highest rates of FASD in the world, which at times is linked to pregnancies that are influenced by underage drinking.

The Enyobeni tavern tragedy in East London, when 21 school children died in a crowded tavern, highlighted the prevalence of this problem.

The Beer Association of SA (BASA) recognises the need to raise awareness among South Africa's youth of the dangers of underage drinking. BASA runs a nationwide series of events at schools throughout the year to drive home messages against alcohol abuse and that “no amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy”.

This year, BASA has led several impactful initiatives, including a uniform hand-over at Zenzeleni Primary School and a sanitary drive at Aurora Girls High School in Gauteng. In August, BASA was hosted at the Siyaphakama Multisport Tournament in Gqeberha involving eight different school teams to promote health and fitness.

BASA has partnered with regulatory authorities such as the JMPD, the Department of Education, National Liquor Traders, SANTACO and other key stakeholders to achieve its goals. In shining the spotlight on FASD and advocating for no underage drinking, as one of the contributing factors

to FASD, BASA is on a drive to collaborate with stakeholders that share the vision of having these societal issues eliminated.

BASA CEO Charlene Louw says that high levels of underage drinking and FASD in South Africa reflect a combination of factors – including socio-economic deprivation, hopelessness and ignorance. Implementing prevention strategies during early adolescence is needed to prevent an escalation.

“This is a tragedy, not only for the young people and their babies but for the country. South Africa's economy cannot afford

to support victims of FASD who are unable to lead fulfilling lives. We must drive home how important it is that people under 18 do not drink at all, and that people over 18 should only drink responsibly.”

South Africa Wine champions responsible drinking

ALCOHOL abuse is a global concern – and South Africa is no exception. South Africa Wine recognises its role in addressing this issue and is committed to promoting a responsible drinking culture.

South Africa Wine aims to make a positive impact through targeted interventions and social upliftment initiatives across the wine industry. A proud member of Aware.org, South Africa Wine is dedicated to reducing harmful

alcohol consumption through public education, awareness campaigns and partnerships with key organisations. Its efforts align with internationally-recognised industry commitments, ensuring it promotes healthy choices and good governance.

“Creating a responsible drinking culture in South Africa is not just a goal, it's a necessity. By working together with industry leaders like South Africa Wine, we can make a tangible difference in the

lives of many, especially in vulnerable communities,” says Mokebe Thulo, CEO at Aware.org.

One of South Africa Wine's key partnerships is with the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR), which focuses on addressing FASD in high-risk areas. Through research, training and community programmes, FARR is making strides in preventing FASD and educating communities about the dangers of alcohol during pregnancy.

“South Africa Wine believes the health and safety of those working in the wine and brandy value chains, and their communities, are essential. We are committed to creating an environment where people can enjoy our products responsibly – and awareness and prevention are key to a healthier future,” said South Africa Wine CEO, Rico Basson.

For more information, contact South Africa Wine at 021 276 0430 or visit www.sawine.co.za

farr

There is **NO** 'safe time' to consume alcohol during pregnancy

Share the message

NO amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy

FASD is associated with:

- Behavioural Disabilities
- Cognitive Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities & Birth Defects



Support
pregnant woman
to have
alcohol-free
pregnancies!

FASD causes permanent damage but is 100% preventable

