



Media Statement

8 October 2018

Use former gangsters to combat gangsterism in schools and communities- learners urges government

Bullying, gangsterism and violence in schools came under the serious spotlight during the Provincial School Safety Debates that were held in Middelburg, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality on Saturday (6 October 2018). During the debates, learners appealed to government to consider using people who were themselves gangsters in the campaigns against gangsterism and bullying in schools in order to get rid of these rowdy people at schools.

The learners believe former gang members also understand how gangs operate and would be more knowledgeable on how these groupings function. They further pointed out that some learners often subscribe to gangs because they want to have a sense of belonging and to also feel safe either in schools or in communities where they live.

The debaters further called on government to randomly conduct tests on learners for drugs on regular basis especially in schools that are considered hotspots in the province and that the police should work hard to bring to book the people who they referred to as *career drug dealers*. They blamed career drug dealers for the rising number of learners involved in drugs and substance abuse.

Meanwhile, Mr. Jacob Phala, who spoke on behalf of Community Safety, Security and Liaison MEC Pat Ngomane, says that parents should also play a role in school safety by monitoring the behavioral patterns of their children.

He says some parents may not even be aware that their children are bullies at school and this they can only pick up if they are involved in the school lives of their children. He added that children also copy some violent tendencies at home from their own parents because children are the products of the environments that they live in.

He explained that bullying is detrimental to the learners as it affects those who are bullied in their school work and also become negatively affected. According to Phala, some even stop believing in their own abilities and talents and in worst cases the bullied learners if not assisted may end up committing suicide.

“Parents should therefore ensure that they look for signs that their children could be having challenges at school. In worst cases some children would lie and come up with all sorts of reasons to bunk school because of the fear that is instilled by these bullies.” Phala added.

He went on to blame the existence of bullies to communities saying that bullies are mostly products of their environment because some of them belong to gangs in communities. He further encouraged parents to instill good moral values in their children while they are still young because failure to do so is one of the reasons why some learners violate others in schooling environments.

Phala also motivated the learners who participated in the programme to become real school safety ambassadors by among others participating meaningfully in School Safety Committees in their respective schools and area of residence.

Yesterday's programme is part of the School Safety Projects that is spearheaded by DCSSL, Department of Education, SAPS and other stakeholders. It is part of the efforts to make schools safe havens for learning and teaching.

Twenty (20) learners made presentations on the topic: "Reflection on our education system in the midst of bullying, gangsterism and drugs. Gert Sibande Region were named the winners and Nkangala Region became runners up while Ehlanzeni and Bohlabela regions walked away with third and fourth positions. All the participating learners received tablets and certificate with the wining region, Gert Sibande, walking away with a floating trophy.

Meanwhile MEC Ngomane has congratulated the Mpumalanga's representatives at this year National Road Safety Debate and Participatory Education Technique finals for being named runners in both urban and rural categories for 2018. The finals were held at Lakeside in Benoni, Gauteng province from 2 to 5 October 2018.

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