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Improving Health: TAC at work - Saving the Future, TAC Ekurhuleni working in schools

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The learners of Katlehong and Thuto Pele High Schools in the southern region of Ekurhuleni are benefitting from much more than the normal school curriculum. Nthabiseng Maretlane a TAC Community Health Advocate and Dikeledi Senong, Prevention and Treatment Literacy Practitioner in the area are giving the learners life skills by educating them on Teenage Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV and Behavioural Change strategies.

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The initiative is a recommendation from the TAC Katlehong South Branch members who are concerned about the high incidence of teenage pregnancy in the area and reports from the local clinic on the large number of high school children who report at the clinic with Gonorrhoea, a common STI. The teachers and learners at the two schools have welcomed the initiative as an activity that will help to combat STIs and HIV infections in the community.

Being young women that the learners can relate to, the facilitators have given the learners an exceptional platform to freely discuss issues of sexuality and their challenges as teenagers. These are issues that they are not able to discuss openly with their parents and teachers.

"Teenagers are very vocal and become excited when talking about issues of sex and sexuality, and their participation level is very impressive, but they need a lot more education on issues of HIV, STI?s and Sexuality.? says Nthabiseng.

During the weekly sessions, Nthabiseng found that the learners were not able to differentiate between HIV and AIDS even though there is an understanding of the modes of transmission of HIV; in addition, they did not understand the relationship between unprotected sex and the contraction of other STIs, excluding HIV.

?I would like to see this programme going down to all the high schools in the area, especially with the proposed HCT in Schools campaign as the students will be better prepared to take the HIV test and through the programme can be empowered to accept their status if they test positive.? says Nthabiseng.

The programme is currently benefitting 230 grade eight and nine learners from both schools.

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