

Success against FAS in De Aar spreads to more areas

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The Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) has recorded the most notable successes in the area of reducing FAS specifically in De Aar in the Northern Cape, with a 30% reduction reported since 1997. Based on these results FARR has, throughout the year, extended its programmes to include other areas in the Northern and Western Cape.

Through funding from the Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol Use (ARA), FARR has grown over the past 15 years from producing research in the field of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), with the most severe form being FAS, to administering tangible awareness, prevention management and training programmes.

Over the years, the ARA has contributed in excess of R15 million to FARR to ensure that the promising outcomes of the De Aar programme could be extended to similar projects in Kimberley, Prince Alfred's Hamlet and Beaufort West. These areas were specifically selected because of the large percentage of FAS occurrences in the Northern Cape.

"We recognise National FAS day and the prevalence of this disorder in South Africa," says ARA spokesperson Adrian Botha. "In De Aar, 120 out of every 1,000 people had been diagnosed with FAS and this figure now being reduced to 80 per 1000 after FARR's intervention from 2001-2002. This sterling work done by FARR has resulted in the first ever decrease in a FAS prevalence rate."

Prompted by the success of FARR's FAS prevalence study in De Aar, the organisation was invited by the government to implement a similar three-year programme in Kimberley. The focus areas for this 3-year programme are Roodepan and Galeshewe where the 14 primary schools located in these two communities participated in the study.

Since May this year, 85% of the 1,585 Grade 1 learners assigned to the study were screened and clinically assessed. Neurodevelopment testing and maternal interviews will commence towards the end of 2012. The outcome of this FAS Prevalence Study will provide the Northern Cape with its third FAS rate and will bring this province closer to obtaining a FAS prevalence rate for the entire region.

In addition to implementing a FAS prevalence study, FARR will be running its highly successful Healthy Mother Healthy Baby (HMHB) programme© in Kimberley. The HMHB programme serves as a guide for expectant and new mothers through the exciting process of pregnancy, with a focus on nutrition, exercise, and abstinence from harmful substances such as smoking and alcohol. FARR has also trained service providers such as the health professionals and educators to initiate the HMHB programme©.

The Kimberley project is an excellent example of a public-private-partnership as the Prevalence Study is funded by the Department of Social Development, whilst the Awareness and Prevention work are funded by Discovery Fund, Distell and a family group of philanthropists. The administrative support and human resource management is funded by ARA via the Cape Town office.

A new FARR centre was opened in Prince Alfred's Hamlet in the Western Cape earlier this year and has implemented awareness and prevention programmes in the form of industrial theatre productions and

workshop (LoveChild in partnership with takeAWAY theatre), illustrating social issues like FAS, teenage pregnancy, abuse and domestic violence. Over 1,800 community members in these areas alone have benefited from this programme.

"Through the funding of the ARA, we are able to continue our work within the Northern Cape and Western Cape Provinces and will hopefully extend our programmes to other areas in South Africa quite soon," says FARR CEO Leana Olivier. "In so doing, we can obtain an even more accurate FAS prevalence rates within the country."

For more information on ARA please visit the ARA website at www.ara.co.za or FARR on www.farr-sa.co.za

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