

Increasing Crime in Bathurst Community

By Sinalo Peyi

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The community of Bathurst, in Makhandla, Eastern Cape is daily facing an increasing problem of crime. Many young people between the ages of 13 and 27 are out of school and unemployed and they often fall victim to drug abuse.

The local Seventh Day Adventist Church, called a community meeting to teach about the dangers of drug addiction. The church advised community members to find collective solutions to take a stand and voice out their needs.

The drug problem in Bathurst is worsening, teenagers can easily access drugs, even at school. Drugs are even being sold to children by community members in a bid to make money. But the police are not doing enough, they don't patrol the area to keep it safe and ignore the drug problem in the community.

Bathurst is a community with high gender-based violence (GBV) incidents. Women are often attacked and killed in their own homes while justice is rarely served. The community also faces serious challenges in accessing the police station. Many feel that the police station is a long distance away, dangerous, and full of risks, especially for those who need to report emergencies.

During the meeting, community members complained that when they call the police station for help, their calls often go unanswered. Sometimes they are told that there are no police vehicles available to service them. As a result, many people lose their lives waiting for help.

The community church agreed that something needs to be done so the Ndlambe Municipality may be able to assist.

Nolukhanyo Kofi (32) said the community needs to stand together to raise awareness, instead of waiting for nothing. "I don't understand why the community leaders focus on campaigning for votes instead of ensuring a safe and peaceful environment," Kofi added.

Isikhalo Women's Movement representative Siphosethu Ndabeni said, "The community leaders need support [from the Community] as they are willing to do anything to ensure everyone is safe to walk around the streets any time."

The community has resolved to take a stand and organise a peaceful protest to demand change from relevant authorities. The community also calls for stakeholders to join in making a more peaceful community. Importantly, the community encouraged the need for intensified educational campaigns to combat drug abuse.

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