

Young people making their voices heard

The youth of John Taolo Gaetsewe district gathered in Bankhara community hall on the 14th June to commemorate the June 16 uprisings. The event was graced by the presence of the Executive Mayor, Mayors from the local municipalities, councillors and government departments. When addressing the young people, the Executive Mayor stressed on the current challenges facing youth namely, unemployment, crime and education. The mayor encouraged youth to take advantage of the opportunities given to them, to get educated and refrain from unruly behaviour by getting involved in crime. She also urged them to take entrepreneurship seriously and contribute to the growth of the district. The Executive Mayor also mentioned that through the intervention of the district municipality, they were able to sign a memorandum of understanding with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), where a full-time operating office will be opened in the district. The office will serve all youth from the district offering full services of the NYDA with a staff complement that will assist young people with all the necessary NYDA services.

This year's approach was similar to last year's, where government departments presented programmes tailored for youth in their respective departments. The reason behind this was informed by the need to bring information to young people in a form of presentations and question session instead of focusing on speech after speech and the events of the 1976 school uprisings.

Government departments shared information on their programmes, amongst the departments that presented was the Department of Health which tackled health issues amongst young people particularly HIV&AIDS and STIs. The department also conducted health screenings, HIV testing and counselling. Another sector that presented was the Thuthuzela Care centre, which is a component of the National Prosecuting Authority dealing with victims of rape and abuse. The police service also presented on crime issues in the district and the current trend of school gang groups terrorising the communities. The department of Agriculture and the municipality's local economic development also made presentations on programmes for young people opportunities available for them. The department of Labour focused on youth unemployment, registration on the skills database and they also collected CVs of young people.

A question and answer session was opened for young people and the youth were adamant that they are concerned about the high rate of unemployment and skills development. They also raised concerns with regard to services at government departments and the treatment they get when waiting to be assisted. Young people felt they want to be empowered, they feel that they do want to contribute to their communities, and they felt that such events help them to gain knowledge which they can share with their peers. The Executive Mayor appealed to them to protect and embrace the legacy left by Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu by living their lives in a respectable manner and to continue the course for the struggle of young people.

