

Healthy Nations Empowered Communities

A collaborative initiative in Southern African countries, SAAPA is a network which aims to ensure that civil society plays a role in addressing the challenge of harmonising and accelerating alcohol policy development in the region.



TO :

Ms BP Mbinqo-Gigaba
Chairperson – Portfolio Committee on Basic Education
Parliament
Cape Town

ATTENTION:

Llewellyn Brown
Email : lbrown@parliament.gov.za

Subject: Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill, 2022 – Clauses 8(1)(b) and 8(1)(c) to 8(1)(g)

Alcohol/liquor in Schools – 15 June 2022

Submitted by:

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Who are we?

We are the Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance in SA (SAAPA SA), a non-sectarian, secular, non-governmental, non-profit civil society organisation working for an alcohol-safer South Africa. We approach the issue of alcohol harm from a public health and human rights perspective and would like to see government, inter alia, implement the country's Liquor Policy of 2016 and pass the Liquor Amendment Bill of 2016 which aims to give effect to the Policy. We would also like to see the general public empowered to have a meaningful say over when, where and how alcohol is sold and consumed in their communities.

We are the South African chapter of a regional Southern Africa alliance and collectively are members of the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA) which has member alliances across the world. SAAPA SA has a network of 61 Alliance Partners, comprising NGOs and community-based organisations in a variety of sectors – women, GBV, children, education, violence, development, poverty, health and other social

justice sectors. Our Alliance Partners are located in all provinces across the country and represent the interests of hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries.

Below is our submission on the BELA Bill of 2021 which calls for a return to the 2015 version of the Bill.

Summary

SAAPA SA is working for an alcohol-safer South Africa. This means ensuring that those who sell and consume alcohol do so in a way that doesn't cause harm to drinkers and, more importantly, doesn't cause harm to others. This is why we base our work on the principles of the World Health Organisation's Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (2010).¹

Key to our work is the protection of the children and young people of our country who are more vulnerable than adults, with little capacity to defend themselves against the harm that can be inflicted on them by adults. SAAPA SA sees schools as alcohol-free zones, providing a safe space for learners who are often at risk of alcohol-related harm in the communities where they live.

The Minister has said that 'alcohol has a place in our society' and seems to have developed the new liquor proposals based on this belief and on the clauses contained in the Western Cape Education Amendment Act which became law in November 2018. We are not challenging the Minister's observation that alcohol has a place in our society, but we believe that **alcohol has no place in our schools**. We urge a return to the 2015 version of the BELA Bill and its call for a complete prohibition of alcohol at schools (though we would argue for minor modifications to allow adults living on school premises to have alcohol in their private quarters under set conditions).

We believe that we will show – with the help of inputs from others like Equal Education and Teddy Bear Foundation, the support of our 60 Alliance Partner organisations, and evidence-based research – that there has to be a better way to assist schools to raise the necessary funds for their important and valuable role in growing our children. We will remind you throughout the document that **alcohol has no place in our schools** and, at the end of your extensive public participation process, we believe you will come to the same conclusion and advise a return to the ethical, principled position in the 2015 version of the BELA Bill which confirmed that **alcohol has no place in our schools**.

Background to BELA Bill liquor clauses – South African Schools Act and other Basic Education laws

The post-apartheid South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) makes no mention of alcohol, drugs, dangerous objects or prohibited substances. In subsequent amendments to the Act, usually within an Education Laws Amendment Act (including 100 of 1997, 48 of 1999, 53 of 2000, 57 of 2001, 50 of 2002, 1 of 2004 and 24 of 2005), there is no mention of alcohol, liquor, drugs, weapons or prohibited substances in relation to the South Africa Schools Act.

It is only in the Education Laws Amendment Act (53 of 2000) that alcohol, drugs and weapons are first mentioned, but in an amendment to the Employment of Educators Act, 76 of 1998. In that Amended Act, there is a clause prohibiting teachers from bringing to school, or using at school, alcohol, drugs and weapons, as well as a set of clauses in relation to ill health brought on by the harmful use of alcohol or drugs. One presumes this was introduced because a problem with respect to use of these items by teachers was identified and needed to be addressed.

¹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/52824/retrieve>

Then, in the Education Laws Amendment Act (31 of 2007), the South African Schools Act was amended to include a clause which said:

8A. (1) Unless authorised by the principal for legitimate educational purposes, no person may bring a dangerous object or illegal drug onto school premises or have such object or drug in his or her possession on school premises or during any school activity.

It is safe to assume that 'dangerous objects' and 'illegal drugs' were deemed to be a problem amongst learners in schools at that time and needed to be managed, hence the amendment above and other clauses which provided for search operations and processes for dealing with transgressors. Although the clause says that 'no person' may bring these items onto school premises, the clause seems to be aimed at learners as the clauses detailing search operations and other actions refers specifically and only to learners.

The first Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (15 of 2011) contains no reference to any of the aforementioned items in either the South African Schools Act or the Employment of Educators' Act.

In 2015, the first iteration of the current Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill proposed the addition of 'liquor' and 'other prohibited substances' to the list of items that learners could not have on school premises in terms of the South African Schools Act, as amended. One can again assume that alcohol/liquor, which is a legal drug, had also been identified as a problem in schools and so needed to be mentioned specifically in the legislation. Furthermore, 'other prohibited substances' refers specifically to any substance contemplated in the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport Act (14 of 1997), the use of which was presumably increasing in the school environment.

This progression of the legislation, specifically the South African Schools Act, is an indication that, over time, more and more learners were bringing to schools, and/or using, one or more of these items and steps needed to be taken to deal with the problem.

However, the shift in the 2021 version of the 2015 BELA Bill sends a clear message that alcohol is now seen as less of a threat. The clause in 2015 which prohibited alcohol, read as follows: *Unless authorised by the principal for legitimate educational purposes, no person may bring liquor, a dangerous object [or], an illegal drug or a prohibited substance onto school premises or have such liquor, dangerous object [or], illegal drug or prohibited substance in his or her possession on school premises or during any school activity.*

Now, in the 2021 Bill, it reads: *Unless authorised by the principal for legitimate educational purposes, no person may bring a dangerous object or a drug onto school premises or have such dangerous object or drug in his or her possession on school premises or during any school activity.*

So 'illegal drug' and 'prohibited substance' are now one thing and liquor, which is itself a drug, has been removed and now appears in the subsequent clause: *No person may bring liquor onto public school premises, or have liquor in his or her possession, or consume or sell liquor on public school premises, or during any public school activity.* The term 'person' seems, as before, to refer to learners as opposed to teachers and admin staff and adults in general.

Then follows a completely new clause saying that, notwithstanding the previous clause, liquor will be allowed on school premises and at school functions off school premises for the general purpose of fund-raising. So it would seem that the risks associated with alcohol are now deemed to be less significant, and their mitigation less important, than the potential alcohol has as a money spinner for schools.

The only apparent reason for this shift in policy by national government is the decision by the Western Cape government – in the face of resistance from, inter alia, teacher unions, Equal Education, the Muslim Judicial Council, the Western Cape ANC and the Minister of Basic Education herself – to propose amendments to provincial education legislation that would allow schools to use alcohol to raise funds. The Minister called on the MEC for Education in the Western Cape to put a hold on the proposed amendments because she was very unhappy with them. Sometime after that meeting, which took place in 2017, and the passing of the Western Cape Education Amendment Bill in November 2018, the national legislation changed from a blanket ban on alcohol at schools and school events to a proposal very similar to that of the Western Cape Education Department.

SAAPA SA believes this was an incorrect decision by the national department and urges a return to the BELA Bill clauses of 2015, with the addition of a clause allowing adults living in private quarters on school premises to have alcohol in their homes under strict conditions. Otherwise, **alcohol has no place in our schools.**

Provincial liquor legislation

- The Eastern Cape Liquor Act (10 of 2003) suggests that, while alcohol outlets can be near schools, their proximity can be a problem, so there are specific obligations on outlets applying for a licence for premises within 100m of a school.
- The Free State Liquor and Gambling Act (6 of 2010) only prohibits the use of alcohol by school-going children.
- The Gauteng Liquor Act of 2003 says that: *The Board shall grant an application in the case of premises not situated within a radius of five hundred (500) metres in the vicinity of a place of worship, educational institution, similar licensed premises, public transport facility, or such further distance as the Board may determine or as may be prescribed from time to time.* In other words, premises within 500 metres or more of a school cannot have liquor licences.
- The KwaZulu Natal Liquor Licensing Act (6 of 2010) discourages licensed premises within 500m of schools.
- The Limpopo Liquor (5 of 2009) says that there shouldn't be licensed premises within the prescribed distance from a school. Regulations drawn up in 2019 say that: *The Board may approve an application for a liquor licence, if the premises are not situated within a radius of five hundred (500) metres, or such other distance as the Board may determine from time to time, of (a) school.*
- The Mpumalanga Liquor Licensing Act (5 of 2006) says that a licence may be issued if *the granting of the licence is in the public interest, with due regard to the proximity of the premises concerned to, inter alia, educational institutions, public roads or religious institutions.*
- In the North West Provincial Liquor Policy White Paper of 2014, there is a stated intention to only allow licensed premises within one kilometre of a school in a rural area and 500m in an urban area.
- The Northern Cape Liquor Act (2 of 2008) says that the Liquor Board must consider *'the location of the proposed premises in regard to its proximity to an institution of learning, a graveyard or a place of worship, where such trade may result in the interference with the business of such institution of learning'*
- Current Western Cape liquor legislation says that the awarding of a liquor licence must not prejudice learners below the age of 18 at an educational institute, while the province's Alcohol Harm Reduction Policy says that *'restrictions [should be placed] on the awarding of licences for the sale of alcohol, based on proximity to certain institutions such as schools'*

It is therefore clear that the liquor authorities in eight of the nine provinces in the country believe there should be some form of restriction in the proximity of liquor outlets to schools as a means of protecting learners from alcohol-related harm.

It is difficult, then, to understand the logic of allowing alcohol within the school itself. SAAPA SA is of the view that provincial liquor legislation is correct to place restrictions on the proximity of alcohol outlets to schools – and believes that, over time, those that are already too close to schools should be given notice to move elsewhere or close down. Furthermore, the irrational proposal to allow alcohol at schools in defiance of the restrictions contained in provincial liquor legislation should be condemned and, if needs be, challenged on legal grounds. Are the liquor policies of eight out of nine provinces wrong to believe, like SAAPA SA, that alcohol should not be near schools and that **it has no place in our schools**.

Children’s Amendment Bill

In 2021, the national Department of Social Development (DSD) conducted a series of public hearings to get input on the Children’s Amendment Bill. In a Parliamentary report on a successful hearing in Kimberley in the Sol Plaatje District, the following was reported:

The Portfolio Committee on Social Development has concluded a successful and informative public hearing on the Children’s Amendment Bill [B18 -2020] in Kimberley where there was a strong support for the Bill. The residents of the Sol Plaatje Local Municipality called for the enhancement and strengthening of laws to prevent access to alcohol by children.

The residents said the access of children to alcohol contributes to the increasing social disintegration. Highlighting their concerns over the sale of alcohol to children, they said the sale results in increasing abuse of alcohol and substances by children. They stressed the lack of adherence to the law that prohibits the sale of alcohol closer to schools. To address this problem, the residents called for the South African Police Service to enhance policing and monitoring of shebeens to ensure that children are protected.²

Is it likely that these same residents would support the availability of alcohol in schools when they are already concerned about the threat to the safety and well-being of children from alcohol outlets near their schools? We are sure that they, like SAAPA SA, would agree that **alcohol has no place in our schools**.

Schools as safe havens

A learner from Malvern in Johannesburg – who is now a student at Wits University (where excessive alcohol consumption is also of concern to her) – lived with her family in a compound in the back of a house with three other households. Amongst them were two excessive drinkers – one a single mother with neglected twin toddlers, the other a school teacher who drank himself to a stupor on Sunday nights, prior to going to teach the following day. The learner was at a school in Kensington. She saw her school as a safe haven, a place where she didn’t have to be exposed to alcohol at all, even during school functions, fund-raising events and the like.

Her story is not unique. There are millions of children in the country who are at risk in one way or another from alcohol-related harm. They shouldn’t have to face those risks in their schools – though some already do because of the drinking habits of some of their teachers and other adults who work at their schools. This shouldn’t happen. Parents give their children into the care of schools for 5 – 8 hours a day, five days a week, around 42 weeks a year. They have the right to expect that the school

² <https://www.parliament.gov.za/press-releases/media-statement-kimberley-residents-call-stricter-enforcement-law-against-sale-alcohol-children>

environment is as safe as it can possibly be – but having alcohol as a factor at schools is not going to contribute to a safe environment. Quite the opposite – it is likely to increase risk where it already exists and introduce risk where it doesn't. Hence our unshakeable view: **alcohol has no place in our schools.**

The proposed amendment contradicts government policies, strategies and constitutional jurisprudence

The Constitution compels government, especially education departments, to accord paramountcy to the best interest of children when making a determination on any matter that affects them, including a decision on whether to allow for the use/sale of alcohol on school premises.

The Constitutional Court in *S v Lawrence*, when discussing the affidavit of an expert in this area, accepted that *“the control of the availability of alcohol is a recognised means of combating the adverse effects of alcohol consumption”* and provides a rational basis for doing so.³

The adverse impact that drugs (inclusive of alcohol) can have on learners is documented in the DBE and UNICEF Guide to Drug Testing in South African Schools as follows:

*“Experimentation is a natural part of development, but unfortunately casual drug use can lead to many problems, not least becoming dependent. In schools, drug use has been linked to academic difficulties, absenteeism, and dropping out, which can have important implications for a learner’s access to quality education. It is also associated with a host of high-risk behaviours, such as unprotected sex, crime and violence, traffic accidents, and mental and physical health problems”*⁴

The Guide states that South African schools should be “alcohol and drug free zones”:

*“It is our duty as families, schools and communities to ensure that schools remain safe and alcohol and drug free zones to enable quality teaching and learning. We must build strong health promotion programmes that can prevent learners from using drugs in the first place. This is the best outcome for everyone.”*⁵

The requirement that South African schools are “alcohol and drug free zones” is also reflected in the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Alcohol and Drug Use Amongst Learners in Schools.⁶

Another national policy, the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Public and Independent Schools and Further Education and Training Institutions,⁷ speaks of the serious need for clear and consistent messaging on the illegality of possessing or using alcohol in South Africa’s schools.

The national position of insulating schools from the presence of alcohol is made law in section 4(4)(a) of the Regulations for the Safety Measures at Public Schools.⁸ This section forbids educators, parents or learners or anyone else from possessing or consuming alcohol during a school activity. And section 4(2)(e) states that no inebriated person may enter school premises.

These policies and guidelines confirm our view: **alcohol has not place in our schools.**

³ *S v Lawrence*, *S v Negal*; *S v Solberg* [1997] ZACC 11; 1997 (10) BCLR 1348; 1997 (4) SA 1176 at paras 69 and 70.

⁴ Department of Basic Education. (2013). Guide to Drug Testing in South African Schools. Pretoria: Government Printer. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.* 15.

⁶ Department of Basic Education (2013). National strategy for the prevention and management of alcohol and drug use amongst learners in schools. Pretoria. iv.

⁷ Department of Education (2002). The National Policy on the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Public and Independent Schools and Further Education and Training Institutions. Government Gazette. (Vol. 450. No. 24172). 5.

⁸ Department of Education (2001). The Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools. Government Gazette. (Vol. 436. No. 22754.) Amended by Department of Education (2006). (Vol. 497. No. 8582)

South African statistics

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Report on Alcohol and Health (2018)⁹, only 31% of South Africans aged 15 and above actually drink alcohol. The rest are people who have never used alcohol or those who have stopped drinking and never restarted. This means that 69% of people aged 15 and above (plus those below 15) in South Africa don't drink alcohol. This surely then means that a comparable percentage of parents with children in school don't drink.

So who are all the people who support this idea of allowing alcohol in schools? It is unlikely to be those who don't drink and, if they are a majority in the country, why are we crafting policy, laws and regulations that are of interest to a minority of people in the country? Why are we creating a situation in which all children will be under threat to satisfy a handful of parents who associate gatherings, celebrations and fund-raising with alcohol?

It is said that the main driver of this proposal is the fact that schools need funds. Why are we putting our children at risk by creating a situation in which selling alcohol is a quick and profitable way of getting the funds necessary to run their schools? Why are they not getting enough funds from government? From corporates? From donor organisations? Are we going to see situations where people who would normally, for religious reasons, have nothing to do with alcohol, are forced to compromise their principles just to get the money to give their children a reasonably adequate education? What about parents and teachers who know the risks who are forced to expose their learners to those risks just so they can run their school better?

Is this not an easy way out for government which is primarily responsible for ensuring that learners can study and grow in a conducive environment? Are they not reneging on the responsibility to do this by encouraging schools to use the profits from alcohol to ensure their survival and ability to get their work done? These proposals are an expedient and unethical way of dealing with this critical issue. More acceptable alternatives need to be found, because **alcohol has no place in our schools.**

'Normalising' the use of alcohol

The WHO Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (2010) promotes three 'best buys' to reduce alcohol consumption and alcohol harm – reducing alcohol availability, increasing the cost of alcohol, and limiting or banning alcohol advertising.

Alcohol advertising 'normalises' the use of alcohol in the minds of those that see alcohol advertising. Advertising happens on radio, TV, in newspapers and magazines, in pamphlets pushed through mail boxes, on social media, on billboards in communities, on shop fronts, at sports and cultural events. This is a deliberate strategy by the alcohol industry to 'persuade' people that alcohol is a natural and necessary part of life. And one of their key strategies is targeting the youth – because the youth are their next market. While they wouldn't actively promote under-age drinking, they certainly want all young people to see drinking as desirable and something to aspire to, something to look forward to doing when they turn 18.

In theory, there are checks and balances which are supposed to prevent alcohol advertising from targeting young people. But these are not statutory controls – they are self-regulated rules agreed upon by the alcohol industry and its 'social responsibility' propaganda arm – aware.org. So adverts are in spaces and at time slots where they will be seen by young people. Huge billboards in communities dominate the skyline, carrying messages about drinking. Influencers are ambassadors for the liquor

⁹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1151838/retrieve>

industry, some launch their own liquor brands with the help of the industry. The ‘guidelines’ set by the industry that are supposed to ‘protect’ people, especially young people, are flouted every day. This is why the WHO says alcohol advertising should be limited or banned – and it is why we endorse their position.

So the use of alcohol is ‘normalised’ for young people, many of whom don’t question why people drink and why they themselves should drink. Peer pressure from their friends adds to the pressure from the industry, leaving them little choice but to go along with everyone else.

Having alcohol in schools is going to further ‘normalise’ alcohol in the minds of young people. If this legislation goes through, school functions, sports events, cultural festivals, prize-giving, matric dances, school fetes and more will all potentially be accompanied by a beer tent or a pop-up bar or drinks on the tables of their parents and teachers. And this ‘normalising’ will not always be ‘positive’.

One of the organisations in our network – Teddy Bear Foundation – has included a story in their submission in which the mother of a learner from an affluent family got very drunk and badly-behaved at a school function in front of the whole school, including the learner’s friends. On her return to school the following week, the learner was subjected to ridicule and ended up so psychologically damaged that she began cutting herself. Can anyone really guarantee that such incidents won’t occur, despite whatever ‘safeguards’ are put in place by the legislation? Can we trust that all adults in a particular school can be relied upon to do what is right? COVID-19 brought home to us very clearly how, once they’ve had a few drinks, people exhibit diminished judgement, less empathy and an increase in irrational behaviour. At that point, the system will unravel and learners will be exposed to harm.

There don’t seem to have been any significant studies in South Africa on this issue – all the more reason to be very cautious about making such decisions. However, some global research has been done which is very instructive.

One article says: *‘However, the critics (including parents and teachers) believe drinking in schools is poor modelling because it gives primacy to alcohol and suggests that drinking is appropriate and must be accommodated in all settings and all times.’*¹⁰ It argues further: *‘Drinking at schools might represent perfectly the ‘normalisation of alcohol into everyday Australian consumer behaviour’.*¹¹

The paper goes on to suggest that *‘Empirical research is needed to determine the prevalence of alcohol use by adults in school settings and the degree to which this may or may not be an emerging public health problem for principals, school councils and school communities.’*¹² It also asked a very important and critical question: *‘How well equipped and informed are school principals and councils to make such decisions [to allow alcohol at schools]? What support is available to support that decision-making?’*¹³ One can go further and ask: how confident can learners be that those adults making the decisions are competent to do so – government officials, teachers, parents?

Surely such research is needed in South Africa, too? Proper, evidence-based, peer-reviewed research on which to base such a far-reaching decision, *before it is taken!* What *seems* to be a good idea might turn out to have disastrous consequences for at least a generation of learners. Even if the decision is reversed

¹⁰ Munro, G., Buykx, P., Ward, B., Rae, J. and Wiggers, J., 2014. Adult drinking in Australian schools. Australian and New Zealand journal of public health, 38(3), p 206.

¹¹ Ibid p 207

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid p 206

in the future, it won't undo the damage that may have been done to those learners and the people around them in the meantime.

Another paper researched the experiences and views of principals in Australian schools who have views ranging from *'there's no place for alcohol in a school environment'* to *'alcohol is just...part of the furniture'*¹⁴. The phrase *'just part of the furniture'* is simply another way of saying it has been 'normalised'.

One principal said: *'I've been in schools where there has been alcohol used at functions and I've just seen so many disasters. I've been at debutante balls at other schools where [the students] were having boat races [drinking games] at the bar with [school] staff.'*¹⁵

*'Alcohol consumption at school events was seen by some principals to reinforce the perception that alcohol is a 'usual' or 'necessary' component of any gathering of adults.'*¹⁶ That is, that alcohol is a 'normal' part of (adult) life, thereby 'grooming' children looking on to believe that it will be a 'normal' part of their lives too. And one world-weary principal commented that *'you can't control parents at a school function.'*¹⁷

SAAPA SA believes the risks to learners, their well-being and their futures is simply not worth the money the school might raise through being allowed to have alcohol at school events. **Alcohol has no place in our schools** – it's important that the Portfolio Committee, Parliament, the Department and the Minister accept this and roll back this particular amendment.

Other potential problems

- Already schools are targeted by criminals for their computers, furnishings, food supplies and more. If it is known that there is also alcohol on the premises for fund-raising purposes or teacher events, schools could become even more of a target.
- Having alcohol at schools can lead to other pressures on them. They will get offers of money and other resources from liquor companies – this must be vigorously discouraged as it will lead to the 'normalising' of their brands and a misguided compulsion to use their products because of the support they have given. Schools should also be prohibited from having any advertising or branding of alcohol products on school premises, in school publications and at school functions. The best way to achieve this is to prohibit alcohol on school premises and to disallow any partnerships between liquor companies and schools.
- It is very likely that, if the Bill is passed in its current form, it's going to lead to conflict between schools and learners who are above the age of 18 who will claim that the law says they are allowed to drink and that therefore the school cannot prevent them having access to alcohol that is available for adults at a function on or off school premises.
- Alcohol at schools can be a contributing factor in traffic-related crashes, involving those who leave a school function having been drinking, whether in a vehicle or on foot.
- Recent government crime statistics have revealed an increase in child assaults and murders. The statistics also point to the involvement of alcohol in these and other crimes.

¹⁴ Ward BM, Buykx P, Munro G, et al. *Are schools and alcohol a good mix? A qualitative study of school principals' experiences of adults' alcohol use in Australian secondary schools.* BMJ Open 2016;6:e010904. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010904 p 3

¹⁵ Ibid p 4

¹⁶ Ibid p 5

¹⁷ Ibid p 6

These and other problems can be avoided by taking a firm and principled stand that acknowledges that **alcohol has no place in our schools.**

Conclusion

Our conclusion is clear throughout our submission – **alcohol has no place in our schools.**

We will end our submission with a final story – we heard it from a young women who spoke to us on Friday 10 June at a stand we erected in Mogale City to inform people about the BELA Bill.

At the age of 16, still at school, she was enticed into drinking by her friends and general peer group, aided and abetted by alcohol advertising. She was not good at drinking and one night got wasted. When she woke up from her drunken stupor, she was semi-naked, lying next to a man. Three weeks later, she discovered she was pregnant.

She had the baby. The ‘father’ is nowhere to be found. She is still at school, trying to complete her studies while coping with the unexpected responsibility of being a mother.

She approached us at our stand to tell us this story because she ‘wishes she had spoken to us before she got drunk and pregnant’ and because she wants to alert others of the risks of letting alcohol determine your life path. She is now 17. She is brave, she is clear, she will probably get her matric, possibly study further and make something of herself while all the time taking care of her child –she deeply regrets what happened, but she doesn’t regret having the child, which is a blessing for the child (and for her).

But the future is usually much bleaker for most people in her position. They leave school, never complete, struggle for the rest of their lives, often repeating their mistakes and compounding the challenges they face.

We owe it to young people to take decisions that will, as far as possible, protect them from situations like this. We are the adults and we must make adult decisions. This is one of those occasions when an adult decision is needed. Science, experience, reality, stories like those we have told – they all point inexorably in the direction of one undeniable truth – **alcohol has no place in our schools. Period.**

Supported by

SAAPA SA’s 61 Alliance Partners:

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Dr. Leane Ramsoomar, PhD in Public Health from the University of the Witwatersrand

SAAPA SA supports the submissions of:

| Equal Education | SECTION27 | SAMRC/Wits Centre for Health Economics & Decision Science (PRICELESS SA) | Teddy Bear Foundation | Youth Kapital |