

Planact and Spring Valley Development Committee hosts xenophobia awareness day

The Spring Valley Development Committee, Planact, the Spring Valley Community Policing Forum and Thembelihle Home Based Caregivers hosted a workshop on the 27th of April 2015 for capacity building of Spring Valley community leaders on the disconnect between lack of service delivery and the presence of foreigners in the community. The workshop was held at a time when the 2015 xenophobic attacks in South Africa were at a peak. The workshop was initially intended for community leaders, but community members came in large numbers and the event was changed into a mass community xenophobia awareness campaign.

Several speakers from various organisations, political parties and government officials addressed the community. Spring Valley Development Committee reminded the community of the service delivery battles they have been fighting, and that foreign nationals have continuously been united with the local people during those times. The committee reminded the community that the real struggle was for services rather than chasing people from their homes. People seemed responsive to what the committee members were saying.

Nkangala District municipality's city official Mduduzi Nkosi advised the community not to chase foreigners away as it will not speed up the process of receiving adequate service delivery.

Planact emphasised to the community members that the lack of basic services in Spring Valley was not related in any way to the presence of foreign nationals. The member of the mayoral committee for LED at eMalahleni municipality, Paul van Castle, assured the community members that the African national Congress (ANC) was trying its best to offer services. Van Castle pleaded with the community of Spring Valley not to follow the violent activities witnessed in other communities, but instead live in harmony with foreign nationals.

A foreign national representing Mozambican community thanked the community for not participating in the attacks and the community's tolerance towards them. He also urged Mozambicans not to isolate themselves from the community, but rather integrate with members of the community.

Umkhonto we Sizwe veteran: Sizakele van Castle recounted the warm welcomes and good experiences she got as an uMkhonto we Sizwe fighter in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Botswana and Mozambique. She urged the community to remember that, during apartheid, other African countries helped South Africa in the fight for freedom and we should be sympathetic of the situations that led them to leave. Zimbabwean Community Representative thanked the community of Spring Valley for welcoming them and treating them like their own

countrymen. She also encouraged Zimbabwean nationals to be more involved in community development initiatives in Spring Valley to integrate with the society better.

Planact has observed that the community was unanimous in condemning Xenophobia, people were more concerned with service provision within the settlement rather than discriminating their neighbours. Planact has incorporated its work programme of creating and strengthening community leadership structures and the workshop was a good indication of the success of the programme. It has started to bear fruitful results as the community organised and managed the entire event without on-the-ground assistance from Planact.

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Community members turned up in large numbers

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Figure 1: (left) Mr Ngwenya of Spring Valley Development Committee and (right) Mama Evelyn of Thembelihle HBC addressing the community

Nkangala District municipality's city official Mduduzi Nkosi advised the community not to chase foreigners away as it will not speed up the process of receiving adequate service delivery.



Figure 2: (left) Cllr Mduduzi Nkosi and (right) Member of the eMalahleni Mayoral Committee Paul van Castle addressing the community

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Mozambican and Zimbabwean community representatives addressing the community

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