

REACH celebrates its 2nd South African Rural Women's Day!



“absolutely fantastic”
“mind-blowing”
“awesome”



A super packed hall!

On Sunday 12 August 2007, just under 600 guests from farm workers and their children to dignitaries from a far a field as Switzerland joined REACH at our 2nd S.A. Rural Women's Day campaign—a day established in 2006 to honour rural women.

The event was held in Grabouw at a local farm community hall and served as our first Annual General Meeting while officially launching a research study conducted by us in 2006 called “Sexual harassment: is it really a problem on farms?”

In amongst the charming anecdotes by MC's Joanie Fredericks, Executive Di-

rector and Madge Jackson, board member, of REACH, various guest speakers were welcomed to share their views of issues affecting farm working communities and the impressive impact that REACH has made thus far in its short life span.

The research findings were projected on screen in English but narrated in Afrikaans to ensure that everyone had a solid understanding of the seriousness of the findings and what it means for not only our farming communities but South Africa as a whole.

The formal entertainment component—a drama pro-

duction was delivered by “Buffeljags Survivors” a group of farm workers and students from Swellendam. Guests were captivated by the actresses and the funny but touching story.

Various activities and singing competitions followed, winners receiving wonderful gifts sponsored by a range of companies. The day ended with the serving of dinner and distribution of clothes and hampers.

The event was a major success, receiving much media attention and dubbed “absolutely fantastic”, “mind-blowing” and “awesome”!

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Study reveals sexual harassment is a problem on farms!

Some of the main findings of the research study which took place on 5 farms from the Overberg and Boland Regions of the Western Cape revealed:

- 32 % of both men and women were victims of sexual harassment, the worst form being rape
- Perpetrators were friends,

family members, colleagues, managers, and community leaders

- A large majority knew of perpetrators harassing other victims
- Children under the age of 12 are the main victims
- The main type of child abuse accounted was rape

- The effects of sexual harassment ranged were severe enough to lead to alcohol and drug abuse and suicidal ideations

- Community members felt that alcohol and drugs played a role in aggravating sexual harassment and other forms of violence.

For printed copies contact us!

Guests speakers

Several guest speakers shared their views on the issues affecting farm working communities and the impact that REACH has had in the community. The following were our esteemed guest speakers:

- Superintendent Hopley, Station Commissioner of Grabouw's Police Department
- Pearl Stanfliet, Deputy Mayor of Theewaterskloof
- Sidney Johannes a farm community leader from Paarl who inspired REACH to initiate this

day in 2006

- Fransiena Pietersen, a farm worker from the Worcester/ Ceres region chosen as the 2006 "Face of REACH"
- Susan Maans, a farm worker from Villiersdorp and this years "Face of REACH"
- Faeza Khan, Chairperson of REACH
- Brian Abdoll, Treasurer of REACH
- Ruth Hall, Vice-Chairperson of REACH



MC's: Madge Jackson (above), Joanie Fredericks (left)

"Buffeljags Survivors"- Drama Production

The Buffeljags Survivors are a group of young ladies from farms in Swellendam formed to deliver this amazing drama production written (and also acted) by Florina Samson, a farm community leader. All the actresses attended our weekend awareness raising workshops which commenced in Swellendam in May this year. Florina wrote this play for REACH, a story that describes a family and a community that is marred by alcohol-

ism, domestic violence, sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS. Her inspiration arose from the daily experiences of farm workers and her aim was to paint this very real picture, with the same message of empowerment that we were able to impart them with. Guests were captivated by the actresses and the incredibly funny but touching story.



The "Buffeljags Survivors" and the writer of the play, Florina Samson.

Volunteers

REACH's event would not have been described as amazing and mind-blowing if it were not for the many, many volunteers who helped us from beginning to end in the planning and delivery of this day: Pat, Flo, Terry, Erin, Reagen, Sandra, Julia, Zeli, Dalila, Bruno, Nic, Lee, the Buffeljag's survivors, Peter Frost and Jacaranda's drivers, Captain

Josephs, Inspector Atson and her many VEP volunteers, not forgetting the many farm owners, managers, workers and drivers who helped us co-ordinate the guest list and organize transport for the masses.



Left: volunteers helping with registration
Right: volunteers helping with the serving of juice to the many kids who joined us on the day.

Media

REACH received amazing media exposure as a direct result of this event and the release of the research study findings. The following are merely a few features that made headlines in various media sources:

- SABC news and radio interviewed Susan Maans, face of REACH 2007, and Claudia Lopes, staff member of REACH, screened on the 12th and on the 13th morning live broadcast.
- Cape Time's interviewed Joanie

and the article was featured on the 1st page of Monday's Cape Times!! What an amazing accomplishment.

- Die Burger featured an article called "Landelike vroue op Grabouwe vereer" also on the 13th of August.
- SANGONeT web portal, accessed by many NGO's, funders and Corporates, featured a profile on REACH following their interview with Joanie on the 16th of August 2007.

- Bush Radio, 15 August 2007
- Landbou week blad



Susan being interviewed by SABC!

Sponsors

Sponsors who made this a memorable event:

Appletizer, Arthur Baguley, Associated Fruit Processors, Brian Abdoll's family & friends, Caledon Casino, Clicks, Community Chest, Dr. Francois Bonnici, Elgin Roses, Emmanuel Garanito, Jalaal's Fire Foods, International Labour Rights Fund, Konica Minolta, Loreal, Molteno Brothers, Ugrow Creative Solutions, Peninsula Beverages, Peter Frost, Revlon, Rhodes Food Products, the Sutter Family, Top Copy (for their fabulous discount), Woolworths and of course our volunteers who gave of their time in-kind!



Winners of gift certificates of spa treatments & dinner by Caledon Casino



Packages made up by our volunteers, sponsored by Community Chest and Woolworths via Greater Good South Africa



Guests enjoying the festivities and the Appletizer.



Floral arrangements sponsored by Elgin Roses

Thank you's!

A big, big thank you to all the guest speakers, volunteers who worked around the clock, sponsors for either their financial or in-kind support (and their representatives who made it happen), REACH staff for working evenings and weekends to ensure that this day would always be remembered, REACH's board

members for their support, guests who gave up their Sunday to be with us, and finally, but most importantly, a big thank you to all the farm workers, managers and owners (too many to actually name) who have supported us throughout this journey!





Sexual crimes rife on Western Cape farms: study

August 12, 2007, 18:00



About a third of women and men living on farms in the Western Cape's Overberg and Boland regions have experienced sexual harassment or rape. That is according to a Rural Education, Awareness and Community

Health (Reach) organisation study.

It also reveals that more and more victims are children under the age of 12. Alcohol abuse remains a main contributing factor.

Police in Grabouw, in the Overberg region of the Western Cape, have appealed to farm owners in the area to monitor the amount of alcohol brought onto farms. It is believed that alcohol and substance abuse by farm workers is

the driving force behind the high rate of sexual-related crimes taking place on farms.

Grabouw is busiest over weekends and that is when the drinking starts, often followed by a litany of sexual abuse. Police say they have volunteer councillors to comfort victims, but it is not enough.

Claudia Lopes of Reach said there are no shelters for women in Grabouw and there are no safe spaces currently.

DIE BURGER

Landelike Vroue of Grabouw Vereer

Millicent Merton

August 13, 2007, Page 9

KAAPSTAD – Honderde plaaswerkers, staatsamptenare, verteenwoordigers van nieregeringsorganisasies en die publiek het gister op 'n plaas by Grabouw byeengekom om landelike vroue te vereer. Landelike Vroue-dag is verlede jaar ingestel deur die groep Rural Education, Awareness & Community Health (Reach). Dié groep beywer hom spesifiek vir die bemagtiging van vroue op die platteland. Me. Joanie Fredericks, uitvoerende direkteur van Reach, het gesê die dag bied plaaswerkers 'n platform om vrylik te praat oor hul ervarings en kommer oor die toestande waarin mense op plase woon.

Die konsep van 'n dag vir landelike vroue het sowat drie jaar gelede ontstaan toe Fredericks deur mnr. Sidney Johannes genader is. Johannes werk op 'n plaas in die Paarl en wou sy ervaring toe sy dogter aan vigs gesterf het, met ander deel. Reach het ook van die geleentheid gebruik gemaak om navorsing wat hy oor seksuele teistering op plase gedoen het, amptelik bekend te maak. Die Burger het vroeër berig byna 'n derde van alle vroue en mans op plase in die Boland en Overberg het al 'n vorm van seksuele teistering, insluitend verkragting, ervaar. Op 'n ligter noot is verskeie aktiwiteite en speletjies

aangebied om die meer as 300 kinders wat teenwoordig was, besig te hou. Die feestelikhede is afgesluit toe klere en kospakkies uitgedeel is.

CAPE TIMES

Farm children are victims of abuse—study

Haziz Hartley

13 August 2007, page 1

Preteens are the main victims of sexual harassment, abuse and rape on farms in the Boland and Overberg, according to a study released on Sunday.

The study by the Rural Education Awareness and Community Health (Reach) NGO, showed that males and females alike were sexually harassed and about a third knew of someone else who had been harassed by the same perpetrator.

While 32 percent of males and females interviewed had experienced some form of sexual harassment, including rape, almost a third of females and 41 percent males knew of someone on their farm who had also been sexually abused.

Most victims were children of 12 years and younger and the main type of abuse was rape, according to the findings, released on Sunday at Reach's first annual general meeting in Grabouw.

Information was obtained at weekend education workshops on farms and through surveys and interviews.

"When we revealed the information on children being subject to abuse, the shock on parents' faces was evident, perhaps because most perpetrators are known. Sexual abuse of children is being exposed.

"We bring this to the attention of government and organisations such as Rape Crisis and Child Line. Government must allocate

resources and the organisations should check what they can do to intervene in rural areas. There are community groups out here, but they need help," Reach executive director Joanie Fredericks said.

She said alcohol was a major contributor, as incidents occurred mostly over weekends when people were drunk, or in social or home settings.

Other findings include:

- Participants interviewed believed drugs or alcohol caused or aggravated sexual violence or harassment.
- Perpetrators included friends, family, co-workers, managers and community leaders.
- Male victims predominantly felt ashamed, humiliated and powerless while female victims generally reacted with anger or fear.
- The effects on victims ranged from alcohol or drug abuse to sleeping and eating disorders and suicidal tendencies.
- Education levels were low among both male and female farm workers although females remained at school longer.
- Most males and females earned less than the minimum salary determined by the Department of Labour.

Fredericks said sexual harassment victims were reluctant to

divulge information because they earned little.

Women on Farms director Fatima Shabodien said she was not surprised by the findings. From her organisation's experience with women living on farms, the sexual abuse rate was much higher. On most farms there was a culture of sexual exploitation, she said.

"Looking from the outside, no one would say there is a crisis, but we view this matter with great alarm."

Even if inadequacies in the justice and policing systems were resolved, a lot of effort would be required to instil good values.

"People at the receiving end of this kind of abuse are those who are dependent and rely on someone else for their livelihood - especially women and children. So another important intervention is economic empowerment," Shabodien said.

SANGONeT

NGO Profile: Rural Education, Awareness & Community Health

by Badumile Duma

16 August 2007

Exposing Sexual Disparities in Farming Communities

Rural Education, Awareness and Community Health (REACH) was established to respond to the heightening levels of sexual harassment evident in South Africa's rural farming communities.

In the context of sexual harassment, the organisation raises awareness of the prevalence of sexual and domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse and HIV/AIDS in Western Cape's farming rural communities.

[REACH](#) was co-founded by Joanie Fredericks, Executive Director, and Claudia Lopes, Training and Counselling Director, in response to a study on sexual harassment conducted by Fredericks in 2003. The study, ['Sexual Harassment at work on farms in the Overberg/Western Cape Region'](#), exposed the high prevalence of sexual harassment, sexual and domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse and HIV/AIDS in this region.

Despite the hype and promises made by government and civil society following the launch of the study, Fredericks notes that subsequently there was a very distinct lack of programmes and absence of support services that addressed and assisted rural farming communities in their plight against these social problems.

In response to the great need

that this lack of programmes and services inspired, Fredericks and Lopes established REACH in February 2005. Fredericks explains that in the months leading up to the launch of the organisation, she came to the realisation that, "If I wanted to see any changes in the rural areas, I was the person who was going to have to do something about it."

True to her Roots



As the youngest daughter of a farm worker in Grabouw in the Western Cape, Fredericks grew up to be one of the first women forklift drivers in the area. In an attempt to discourage her, local male farmers who felt women should not do 'men's work' often sexually and verbally harassed her.

Despite numerous attempts to gain support from her female counterparts, Fredericks was continuously faced with women who were indifference to

her situation. After three years as a forklift driver facing constant sexual harassment with no respite, Fredericks decided to resign, but resolved that she would come back to change people's perspectives of sexual harassment.

Since then, Fredericks has worked for the Sexual Harassment Education Project (SHEP), assisting the organisation to establish an office in rural Western Cape. While working for SHEP, Fredericks produced the research study which informed the establishment of REACH.

In the period between 2003 and 2005, she also worked for the Centre for Rural Legal Studies, the Public Health Department Medical School of Cape Town, and the Industrial Health Research Group at the University of Cape Town as a researcher and research assistant.

Fredericks's first hand experience with sexual harassment combined with her strong background in research has greatly influenced her philosophy for REACH. Fredericks states that, "I have complete passion for farm workers," adding that, "I have no interest in profiting from the work that I do."

In light of her philosophy, Fredericks appraises South Africa's key development challenges within the context of financial constraints facing the development sector. She notes that, "The non-profit sector has

become too much like business because of the need for sustainability." Fredericks bemoans that the lack of financial resources within this sector has resulted in the development sector being more profit driven rather than passion driven.

Empowering Rural Farming Communities

Amongst other things, the organisation's main objectives are to provide training and raise awareness on sexual harassment and sexual violence on farms, establish counselling and legal support services on farms, and conduct research on factors contributing to sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Since its inception, REACH has gradually made headway towards realising its main objectives in the farming communities of the Western Cape.

To address rural communities' social problems faced by farm workers in this region, REACH provides rights-based, skills-based and awareness raising workshops focused on sexual harassment, sexual and domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse and HIV/AIDS.

The organisation also embarks on campaigns and advocacy activities to ensure adequate policy and legislative framework to address these problems. In line with this, REACH launched a South African Rural Women's Day campaign on 12 August 2006. This annual campaign aims to explore social issues faced by rural women and also ways in which communities can invest in the empowerment of rural women.

In a [document](#) explaining the

merits of the campaign, REACH says that, "We aim to ensure that rural women are finally honoured in a society where celebrations of Women's Day often neglect these women."

South African Rural Women's Day

This year's campaign was attended by 576 women and children from the Western Cape. Fredericks delightedly notes that the event was, "Absolutely fantastic and mind-blowing." She highlights this campaign as a turning point for rural women and their issues within farming communities in the Western Cape. She explains that this event is, "A platform for rural women to campaign."

Fredericks maintains that prior to the establishment of this event, there were very few platforms that allowed rural women the opportunity to air and share their views constructively. In light of this, she explains that the idea for the campaign was borne out of the question, "What can a person do to get rural women to be taken seriously?"

During the event, REACH launched a research report titled, 'Sexual Harassment on Farms: Is it really a problem', which focused on the prevalence of violence against women and children in farms.

Pushing Forward Irregardless of Challenges

Although REACH only has a modest annual budget of R860 000, Fredericks maintains that there is still scope for growth for

the organisation. She does not foresee REACH closing down due to inadequate funding, instead she highlights that in its first year REACH did not have any official funding but the organisation persevered. She maintains that, "We strive on challenges."

Fredericks notes that the organisation has stayed afloat because, "We strongly believe that what we are doing is the right thing."

Despite current financial constraints, Fredericks is optimistic that in the near future the organisation will broaden out into all the rural areas of the Western Cape, with the ultimate goal of branching out nationally and even internationally.

More pictures...



Rural Education, Awareness & Community Health

REACH is a non-profit organization that addresses sexual harassment and sexual violence on farms in the Overberg Region of the Western Cape by means of an holistic approach that incorporates awareness raising, counselling and legal skills training, campaigning, research and policy advocacy with the vision of an empowered community that is socially aware, independent, responsible, self-caring and free of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

For any further information or for copies of our annual report and research report contact us:
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