

NURSING STUDENTS PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING AMONG THE HOMELESS



Second year Nursing students at the Point intervention.

Second-year UKZN Nursing students presented an educational play and interactive programme for homeless people in the Point area in Durban with the emphasis on the importance of personal hygiene and the dangers of unprotected sex and substance abuse.

A total of 22 student nurses led by Mr Nhlanhla Ngubane hosted the event as part of their community intervention project at a church in Point Road.

Ms Ntombizine Dazela said they came up with the programme for the homeless after they assessed the community to identify needs and gaps within the community.

'After close observation and speaking to local community leaders, we identified three pressing social issues: hygiene, substance abuse and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among homeless people,' said Dazela.

The educational play was about the importance of hygiene, dangers of alcohol abuse and how it can lead to unprotected sex. It portrayed how alcohol and drug abuse can lead to domestic violence and in making bad decisions.

After the play, there were one-on-one sessions between the homeless and students at three stations.

At the hygiene station, the homeless were taught about the importance of self-love and personal hygiene. They were also told about the importance of wearing clean clothes and daily washing of their hair and hands to prevent skin disease and lice.

At the HIV and AIDS station they were taught about condom use and prevention. Ms Thandokuhle Ntshangase said: 'HIV/AIDS is still prevalent among the Point homeless due to prostitution.

Drug and alcohol abuse was handled at the third station. Ms Zanele Ngcamu said the Point Police Station Commander told them that substance abuse was the biggest issue in the area, especially drugs and alcohol. 'A lot of the homeless people take whoonga,' she said

Ngcamu hopes the intervention will help make a difference in the lives of the homeless people.

The people were happy about the intervention and openly shared reasons why they used drugs and alcohol, 'I drink a lot. I don't think alcohol is a problem. It helps me forget,' said one of the men. 'At least I don't take cocaine!'

'I know unprotected sex is dangerous, but what can we do? When you get to the clinic, they sometimes chase you,' said one of the women.

After the intervention the homeless were treated to a hot biryani meal and each given a hamper containing a toothbrush, face cloth, soap, female condoms, male condoms and water-based lubricants.

The homeless people promised to bath and brush their teeth.

'We hope this encourages them to change their ways. Some do look like they want to make a difference in their lives. A small change is better than nothing,' said Ms Michelle Mbayiwa

Mbayiwa said they chose the homeless group after their Lecturer, [Dr Mbali Mhlongo](#), assigned the group to the Point area.

Nombuso Dlamini