

A R T S C A P E



May 2010

Artscape's Witzenberg outreach programme

# Report: Youth dialogue

## **Initiative**

The youth dialogue was initiated by Artscape as an integral part of its community outreach programme in the Witzenberg from 6 to 8 May 2010. This programme is structured around entertainment, education and opening up new worlds to people.

By presenting professional productions and workshops, Artscape utilises this programme to promote community-building in rural areas. Apart from the youth dialogue, the Witzenberg community experienced performances by various artists, supplemented by productions for learners and a career expo for high school learners. The arts are used in a creative and non-threatening way to become a vehicle that promotes acceptance of cultural diversity and unites diverse communities.

Through the various components of this programme, Artscape provided a unique platform for both affluent and impoverished communities to learn more about each other and experience the richness of our culturally diverse society. Because Artscape believes in promoting unity in diversity, they utilise this rural programme to encourage respect among people and heal the divisions of the past. It's nation-building in action!

The rural programme wants to establish a partnership between local government, civil society and national government. Developing rural areas is of the utmost importance for the economic growth and value system of South Africa. This programme addresses the importance of the arts in the holistic development of a human being, while developing future leaders through initiatives such as the youth dialogue.

## Stakeholders in the outreach programme



Dr **Ivan Meyer**, Western Cape MEC of Social Development, said his department shares Artscape's vision of developing and uplifting people, especially in rural areas. He added that a project such as the outreach programme can improve the Witzenberg people's quality of life and empower them with the knowledge of how to change their own circumstances. Meyer was specifically excited about the programme's focus on young people. The opportunity to voice their opinion on issues that form an integral part of their life, is an initiative the department gladly supports and wants to be involved with. He added that partnerships like these help provincial departments reach their goals for the communities they serve.



Witzenberg mayor **Nombasa Mhlati** described Artscape's outreach programme as a blessing for the youth and the broader community. She encouraged schools, youth forums, arts and culture forums and the whole community to utilise this opportunity to empower themselves by broadening their horizons. She added that just as sport is currently uniting the nation, arts and culture have the ability to join communities and help with development.

**ARTSCAPE**



Artscape CEO **Michael Maas** said it is wonderful to reach people who are not regularly exposed to the arts. The aim is not only to entertain, but also to educate and promote community-building through giving people access to each other's cultures.

Nation-building and citizenship are two key issues that South Africa needs to place emphasis on in addressing the legacy of the past, said Ms **Marlene le Roux** of Artscape's Audience Development and Education department. South Africa faces immense challenges, but we need to start somewhere in developing our citizens' critical thinking capacity – this programme is Artscape's contribution to face the challenges head-on.

## Team for youth dialogue

Artscape believes that young people should be given a voice, and was supported in this view by the Western Cape Department of Social Development and the Witzenberg Municipality, represented by Mr Sithembiso Fadana and Ms Jo-Ann Krige. Ms Amelia Burger of the communication and training specialists Wordworx was contracted to develop the structure and contents of the dialogue and act as facilitator.

## Goals

The main purpose of the youth dialogue was to get young people from different communities together to connect with each other, as this would be something new in the Witzenberg. The goal was to get them talking about their realities in the context of their community – their experiences and expectations of the future. The further aim was to equip them with leadership skills. Lastly, they were encouraged to think further than simply listing problems and challenges and get practical and resourceful about the road ahead.

## Logistics and delegates

The youth dialogue was held on Saturday morning 8 May in the John Steyn Library, from 08:30 to 13:00. The Witzenberg Municipality invited about 50 high school learners and other young people in their area, of whom 30 attended the dialogue.

The delegates came from various communities in the Witzenberg – Ceres, Bella Vista, Tulbagh, Op-die-Berg, Nduli, Wolseley, Prince Alfred Hamlet and the surrounding farms. The various youth forums in the area were represented by the Witzenberg Youth Council, and there were also young people from faith-based organisations as well as the cultural forum.

The involvement of high school learners was a first for this municipal area – these grade 11 and 12 learners came from Charlie Hofmeyr High School, Ingcinga Zethu Secondary, Ceres Secondary, Bella Vista High School, Skurweberg Secondary, Waveren High School, Tulbagh High School and Wolseley Secondary. A name list of the individual delegates is attached to the report.

## Invitation

**Beat the silence – let's talk straight**

*Young people, come and make yourselves heard!*

- Celebrate the differences that unite us
- Build a Witzenberg that works
- Foster leadership and life skills

**When?** Saturday morning, 8 May, 08:30 to 12:30 **Where?** John Steyn Library Hall, Ceres

**It starts with YOU and ME**

*"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success". — Henry Ford*

In many ways communication lies at the heart of leadership, team functioning and effective action and change. But to communicate effectively, we must realise that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this as a guide in our interactions with others.

So let's talk! Artscape, the Department of Social Development and the Witzenberg Municipality would like to invite you to take part in a social youth dialogue where the issues are put on the table in an outcomes-orientated workshop.

This stimulating dialogue forms part of Artscape's community outreach programme in the Witzenberg from 5 to 8 May. The project brings arts and culture to communities, introducing people to the performing arts and fostering peace, humanity, tolerance and unity between cultural, faith and linguistic groups. It's nation building in action!

For more information, contact Sithembiso Fadana of the Witzenberg Municipality at [sithembiso@witzenberg.gov.za](mailto:sithembiso@witzenberg.gov.za) or 023 316 1854.

**IMPORTANT: RSVP to Sithembiso by 23 April 2010**

The poster features four logos at the bottom: the West-Kaap logo (a circular emblem with 'WES-KAAP' and 'WESTERN CAPE' text), the South African Department of Social Development logo (a crest with a bird and the text 'social development Department of Social Development REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA'), the Witzenberg logo (a stylized 'M' shape with 'WITZENBERG' text), and the Artscape logo (a stylized arch shape with 'ARTSCAPE' text).

## Programme

Time	Topic	Responsible team member
08:30	Registration	Witzenberg Municipality/Artscape
09:00	Welcome and orientation	Marlene le Roux – Artscape Thandi Swartbooi – Women Unite
09:30	Me, my community and my country – in a facilitated discussion, the delegates share their views on the issues they deal with	Amelia Burger – Wordworx
10:00	Experiential learning games, exercises and discussions around leadership and cooperation	Amelia Burger – Wordworx
10:30	Tea/Coffee	Witzenberg Municipality/Artscape
11:00	Experiential learning games, exercises and discussions around leadership and cooperation	Amelia Burger – Wordworx
12:00	The road ahead – in a facilitated discussion, the issues are taken to a practical view about future possibilities	Amelia Burger – Wordworx
13:00	Lunch	Witzenberg Municipality/Artscape

## Approach

In many ways communication lies at the heart of leadership, team functioning and effective action and change. But to communicate effectively, we must realise that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this as a guide in our interactions with others.

The approach of this social youth dialogue was to get young people from different parts of the Witzenberg community talking – about their realities and to each other. As stated on the invitation, the motto was to beat the silence and talk straight.

But the workshop had to be more than a series of complaints – it had to be outcomes-based. The delegates were encouraged to think practically and be resourceful about their challenges and the road towards building a Witzenberg that works for all its inhabitants. In between putting the issues on the table and suggesting changes and solutions, attention was paid to leadership concepts.

The facilitation was focused on encouraging participation from the delegates and getting them to share their opinions. The methodologies of experiential learning (playing games which are educational, challenging as well as entertaining) as well as small-group discussions and tasks were used to accomplish this.

## **Account of event**

The chilly Ceres morning started with a warm word of welcome by Artscape's Director of Audience Development and Education, Ms Marlene le Roux. She stressed the importance of having young people from different Witzenberg communities in the same room who would voice their realities together, and, as a diverse but united group, work on leadership skills and making suggestions for the road ahead.

Thandi Swartbooi from the music, dance and drama group Women Unite got the delegates to loosen up by letting them do a variety of warm-up activities – she even taught them the diski dance! Witzenberg mayor Nombasa Mhlali joined the warm-up session boots and all, which could only inspire the group. She encouraged them to make the most of the wonderful opportunity and said she looked forward to their input.

Ms Amelia Burger from Wordworx, which specialises in communication and training services, started the “workshop” part of the dialogue by stating that the focus would be on discovering inner potential, while acknowledging the past and present, and looking ahead to the future. The PowerPoint slides that were used as the guideline of the facilitation, are given below.

The facilitator invited the delegates to share information on the issues they deal with in the context of their own lives, their community and even the broader South Africa. Right from the start, it was clear that the delegates were eager to participate, which set the tone for a very constructive workshop.

When the focus fell on the personal level, it was structured in such a way that it would not be invasive – the delegates were simply asked to identify themselves with something or someone, and motivate why. It was encouraging that they mostly identified themselves with inspirational and strong people, animals and characters – lions (strength), eagles (ambitious to reach great heights), trees (growth), Mandela (courage, leadership, caring, ethics).

The delegates were then divided into five smaller groups and asked to list “the good, the bad and the ugly” of their communities, whereafter a representative from each group gave feedback to the big group. It was encouraging that people did not only make long lists of complaints, but were enthusiastic about the positive aspects of the Witzenberg. At the same time they were honest about the issues that in their opinion deserve attention. The details of all the feedback received during the workshop are given below – in this session, the discussions centred around economic and social issues, education and facilities/services.

The dialogue moved on to the topic of leadership, and through experiential learning games and small-group discussions the characteristics of effective leaders were listed and analysed. Attention was paid to a leadership road map through which the standard view of leadership was challenged. The crux of leadership was discussed and some leadership lessons were taught.

In line with its outcomes-based approach, the focus then moved to the road ahead. The community-related discussions had to move beyond listing issues and challenges, therefore the delegates were encouraged to think practically and be resourceful about building a Witzenberg that works for all its inhabitants. In small groups, they came up with suggestions relating to various areas – cooperation and community-building, education, capacity-building, employment and facilities/services (details below).

Overall, the interaction was energising and positive. One of the groups ended the discussion by stating how crucial it is that every individual starts by changing him/herself, then moving on to their family, then their school or church, and then the broader community. That’s how “making a difference” gets practical.

### **Input from the delegates**

The delegates were very forthcoming with their inputs, which contributed to a very constructive workshop. As stated on the invitation, the motto was to beat the silence and talk straight – and that was certainly accomplished, both when challenges were listed and the road ahead was discussed. Below is an account of the input the delegates came up with in their small-group discussions.

#### **1. Positive aspects in the community**

- Friendly, talented, hardworking people
- Lots of goodwill and teamwork
- Natural beauty – mountains, fruit trees, farms
- Tourism
- Good communication (contradicted in issues/challenges)
- No racism (contradicted in issues/challenges)
- Free-spirited

#### **2. Issues/challenges in Witzenberg**

- Economic
  - One of the poorest communities in the Western Cape
  - Lack of facilities
  - Unemployment
  - Lack of business opportunities

- Social
  - Minimal support from leaders
  - Empty promises from office-bearers
  - Some people aren't willing to try something new – they're scared of failure
  - Lack of morals
  - Racism and discrimination
  - Suicide, bitterness and anger
  - Nepotism
  - Alcohol and drug abuse
  - Teenage sex and pregnancies
  - High prevalence of HIV/Aids and TB
  - Lack of confidence and ambition – no drive to succeed
  - Farm evictions
  - Crime, including murder and rape
  - Gangsterism, vandalism and arson
  - People are scared and feel unsafe
- Education
  - High numbers of school drop-outs
  - Lack of quality education
  - Lack of skills
- Facilities/Services
  - No places where youth can come together, relax and bond
  - No investment in culture, sport, etc.
  - Not enough houses and land
  - Not enough schools and clinics
  - Poor service delivery, especially with sewerage and pollution
  - Lack of communication

### **3. Leadership characteristics**

- Ambitious and successful
- Can manage a crisis
- Committed and honest
- Confident, but humble
- Disciplined and punctual
- Fulfil promises to people
- Motivated, with a vision
- Goal-orientated and results-driven

- Good listener, observer and communicator
- Good moral values and standards
- Good people skills, not dictatorial
- Hardworking and organised
- Influential
- Intelligent
- Lead by example (practise what you preach)
- Motivated, with a vision
- Not easily undermined
- Patient and supportive
- Positive, with a sense of humour
- Reliable and trustworthy
- Respect (for self and others)
- Responsible
- Treat people equally

#### **4. Suggestions/requests for changes/solutions**

- Cooperation and community-building
  - Unite and work together in the communities
  - Extend budget for community projects
  - Regain respect for the community
  - Make people realise in what a great place they live (campaigns and motivational speaking)
  - Bring government officials to the area to inspire the people, e.g. from Home Affairs, Social Development, Arts & Culture, Health and Sport & Recreation
  - Encourage shops to give donations to help poor people
- Education
  - Build more schools
  - Create facilities for skills training (e.g. a skills centre)
  - Make bursaries available
  - Encourage students to enter the medical field – the area needs more doctors!
- Capacity-building
  - Exposure to possible future careers
  - Youth programmes focusing on arts & culture, sport, skills development and public speaking/debating
  - Organise youth events like dancing, singing and drama
  - Workshops to inform the community of opportunities
  - Create a cultural forum

- Employment
  - Recognise young people with skills
  - Create more job opportunities by e.g. building factories
  - Offer training for disabled people
- Facilities/Services
  - Create more youth-friendly centres that can advise young people
  - Multi-purpose centre
  - Rehabilitation centres
  - Day clinics
  - Build houses
  - Hire more doctors and nurses to be on standby 24/7
  - Better police service
  - Organise more and better security
  - Improve facilities for disabled people
  - Better information centres, e.g. library and internet cafes

#### **5. Practical concerns and suggestions**

- Financing – youth should get involved and help arrange fundraising activities and sponsorships
- Local government, schools, organisations and churches should be involved in e.g. training
- Involve radio stations and the media to raise awareness of issues and advertise opportunities
- **Key thought:** To make a difference, start with yourself, then your family, then your school or church, then the broader community

#### **Outcomes, recommendations and follow-up**

The youth dialogue succeeded in bringing together young people from different communities in the Witzenberg, to truly celebrate the differences that unite them. They were encouraged to beat the silence by talking straight – and they did so constructively. They took part enthusiastically in the section of the dialogue that focused on leadership and it is clear that this type of workshop was very beneficial to the group.

This report will be submitted to the Western Cape Department of Social Development as well as the Witzenberg Municipality – and the delegates were promised that attention would be paid to their inputs, after which action steps will be taken. We trust that this dialogue and the enthusiasm with which it was approached will have a positive and practical impact on grassroots level, working towards building a Witzenberg that really works.

Not knowing how much participation to expect from the group, the facilitator also prepared content around communication skills, the role of culture, body language, listening habits, conflict-handling, decision-making, assertiveness and motivation – among others, these are all topics that can contribute towards skills and capacity-building among young people in the Witzenberg and in other communities. It is recommended that subsequent workshops/dialogues of this nature are held.

This dialogue needs to be followed up by other workshops in order to build on this basis, and to enrich the youth by also focusing on other topics. As Henry Ford said many years ago: “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success”.

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*Report compiled by Amelia Burger*



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