



The Executive Mayor, Clr Thabo Manyoni was joined by the Deputy Minister of Police, Me Maggie Sotyu and Kgosigadi Gao Moroko from Thaba Nchu's Royal Family at the launch of Safe and Secure Schools Environment that is Free of Gangs and Drugs" Campaign.



MMC Clr Maditaba Matsoetlane addressing the crowd gathered at the launch event

MMM on a campaign to rehabilitate gangsters

Efforts by the Mangaung Metro Municipality to promote safe initiation schools and eradicate gangsterism in the city's three areas came to the spotlight last month when the Executive Mayor launched the "Safe and Secure Schools Environment that is Free of Gangs and Drugs" Campaign.

Launched in Botshabelo on Tuesday, 29 April, the campaign was a "culmination of many months of hard work involving members of the Initiation Schools Liaison Committees, SAPS, Department of Health, just to mention but a few," Clr Thabo Manyoni said.

The campaign will run over time and will target social ills like: increasing number of rape perpetrated against women, the elderly, young children and girls; high crime levels; and an increasing number of gangs operating in communities and schools, amongst other social problems.

One of the things which have been achieved since the partnership with different stakeholders has been the rehabilitation of a group of gangsters from Botshabelo. Over 57 former members of the infamous "Born to Kill" gang have successfully started the path of rehabilitation from what some called their "evil ways," it was announced.

The MMC for Social Services,

Clr Maditaba Matsoetlane, said the process to rehabilitate these youngsters started last year in December.

"Some of the gangsters were using initiation schools as hideout spots, and there was concerted effort between the municipality, police, department of health and the community to reform them. While there were some who went through initiation schools, there was an agreement that we couldn't continue with the initiation of others, if they were going to go back and terrorise their communities," the MMC said. She explained that they have regular meetings with the young men to talk about various issues, while they also have extra mural activities to use their time more wisely.

Rosare Mofokeng, 24, is one of the youngsters who have decided to change the course of their lives by leaving gangsterism. Having been to jail and back since 2002, he said his brother's death at the hands of a rival gang showed him that "it can happen to anyone".

"I decided last year in December that I didn't want to be part of this anymore. I started speaking to other gang members and found that they also wanted to stop. We realised that what we were doing in our communities was wrong; and that our families

could also become victims of these crimes.

"Ous Maditaba helped us ask for forgiveness from the community and our parents. This is what helped us to make peace and be accepted back into our communities," Mofokeng explained.

On her part, the MMC said she is more than happy that they are fulfilling the aims set by the EM.

"We are very happy and proud that we are achieving things we set out last year. Not only in terms of getting rid of gangs in the area, we have also made strides in improving our initiation schools," she said.

The campaign launch also honoured 139 men and women who have heeded the EM's call to ensure their initiation school are legal and safe for operation. Clr Matsoetlane said the imbizo held last year helped bring about the positive results.

About the municipality's interest in the regulation of initiation schools, the Executive Mayor said: "This intervention must not be interpreted as an encroachment or prejudice against the African indigenous cultural and spiritual practices. This is about putting an end to all forms of malpractices, crime and violations committed on the initiates. It is a life-saving endeavour indeed."



Rosare Mofokeng will soon travel around the province to encourage other youngsters to start a new life outside of gangs



Radio announcer Thuso Motaung was the MC for the day

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