

Notes on a Ubumelwane - Neighbourliness meeting at Sunny Cove B&B, held on Saturday, 11th February, 2012, from 3 - 5 pm.

Present were: Nelson, Robbie, Peter, Phumzile, Fundiso, Letson, Jenni and Horst (Chairing).

Introductory remarks by Horst. Education and inequality as a result of the extreme contrast between poor and rich in our area was the stimulus that made us get together. Nelson expanded on his belief that people can make something out of nothing. Those present agreed that patriotism demanded that we find ways to make a difference to the many challenges that impact on a good education in the area.

The following challenges were discussed. They were described and serve as the basis for discussion at our next meeting. Our discussion was a wide scan of many issues. We have not yet decided which ones to act upon or do something about.

The list is in no order of priority.

1. School Governing Bodies (SGB's) in the area are meeting as a 'cluster', just like Head Masters, etc. The value of 'cross-border' meetings is seen as useful. It breaks down borders. SGB's need to play a bigger role in schools. Parents have a role in making education be of greater benefit to learners. Jenni told of the Brazil example where President Lula introduced a rule that says: The quantum of school grants by the state is calculated on the extent to which parent bodies contribute and exercise their role in relation to the good functioning of schools. We agreed that the role of parents has to be enhanced.
2. Jobs. Unemployment, even by qualified people in Masiphumele was a huge problem. And those who get jobs often move out, leaving behind the 'problems' of their community.
3. The problem of the Police. Masi and Ocean View share one Police Station. It is located in Ocean View. The confidence that police act on matters is low. In cases the police seem corrupt and in cahoots with criminals and wrong-doers. Cases never come to court or fail once they are in court. The matter needs more discussion, especially where some officers are the source of problems. Jenni said she would make some enquiries about how cation might best be taken.
4. Drugs and Alcohol abuse. This appears to be a growing problem. Licensed shebeens are established without regard to monitoring the conditions under which they operate. For example they are closer to schools than the law prescribes. Drug lords homes are known but police take no action.
5. Crime. All the challenges we discussed have an impact on crime levels. Unemployment is the main motor that drives crime levels.
6. Navy staff coming to Masi. On week-ends large contingents of navy staff arrive in their cars to drink at shebeens. Two matters seem to drive this development: cultural affinity and having a 'good time' at low prices. There is thus a market in Masi that brings 'new' money into the area. But with it comes an even bigger problem: Prostitution, including child prostitution, drunkenness and problems for local families. Navy people are seen 'paying' kids to go and buy drinks for them that are consumed in their cars. This requires action and will be discussed at the next meeting again.
7. Xenophobia. The authorities seem not to understand what the roots to xenophobia are: employers exploit foreign labour who are willing/having to undercut established wage levels for locals. Lack of labour inspectors lets this problem fester to boiling point. And: How is it that so many foreigners, notably from eastern countries get residence and work permits to open shops in this country? The suspicion that Home Affairs is corrupt and issue permits in return for bribes persists.
8. Land. Masi was built for 50,000 people, during the apartheid years. There are now said to be 250,000 people in Masi and the numbers are growing. The authorities attitude that 'no additional land is available' is untenable. Expansion into the Wetland is the only option for some. Access roads is another problem the authorities are not prioritizing. The lack of land is a catastrophe in the making and requires extraordinary steps. We will discuss this matter again and see what we might be able to do or suggest.
9. Lack of resources in Masi. Sports fields are in short supply and where they exists, lack equipment to make them functional; for example the tennis courts. The list can be extended.

10. Home industries. People have skills and proficiencies.