

ON THE RECORD...

Savera Kalideen, senior Advocacy Manager for Soul City

Chandré Gould speaks to Savera Kalideen, senior Advocacy Manager for Soul City, about the Phuza Wize campaign and the challenges of developing and implementing holistic violence prevention campaigns.

Chandré Gould (CG): The Phuza Wize campaign, launched in 2010, has the very ambitious objective of reducing violent behaviour by men aged 15-35 by 10% by 2014. How did you hope to achieve this?

Savera Kalideen (SK): It was very ambitious, deliberately so. We felt that we had a five-year campaign timeframe and we wanted to address the issue of alcohol-related violence in a multi-pronged manner. That would include policy change, social mobilisation, and knowledge and skills building at both individual and community level, as well as reorienting of services. Our plan was to implement the project in ten communities around the country, and if it worked, we would then have tested a model that could be rolled out nationally.

CG: Have you managed to develop a workable model?

SK: In the end we could not implement the project in the provinces because the global recession had an effect on our donor funding. We had to drop the social mobilisation component of the campaign completely – community involvement is crucial to any violence prevention activity – which really affected our ability to show outcomes.

In the light of the funding cuts we had to change our strategy and have focused on media work, through our television dramas, and worked on effecting policy change.

Since we were looking at alcohol through the lens of safety, we felt it was important to map violence hot spots in communities. We did this in Mbekweni in the Western Cape and in Galeshewe in the Northern Cape. In Mbekweni we were able to follow this with community training on understanding legislative processes and engaging with the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) at municipal level. This training also included a component that showed communities how to engage in the formation of policy and law through developing petitions and submissions. Local councillors were invited to the training to answer questions about various issues that community members had raised in the training as they realised that the law creates space for community engagement. One councillor attended the training in Mbekweni and engaged on issues such as how licences had been granted without community knowledge, why roads were not repaired and why they were not consulted in development initiatives when the IDP had funds for community engagement.

Following this training and the establishment of a Phuza Wize learning group in Mbekweni, a community patrol group was set up to monitor violence hot spots and drinking places. They also worked closely with the designated liquor officers (who they previously didn't know existed) in their community police station.

We have also worked with the media, trying to highlight the evidence that links alcohol

consumption and violence, as well as the need for a comprehensive response to the high levels of alcohol-related violence in the country.

We developed safer social spaces criteria that would lead to increased safety in drinking places if implemented. These are:

1. Have good lightning, clean toilets and security
2. Do not sell to children under 18, those already intoxicated or visibly pregnant women
3. Have no more than three people per square metre
4. Sell food and non-alcoholic drinks; and make water available
5. Have clearly defined serving areas inside and outside
6. Display safe sex messages and condoms
7. Encourage customers not to drink and drive
8. Opening and closing times: 14h00 to 20h00 (Sun), 13h00 to 20h00 (Mon - Thur) and 13h00 to 24h00 (Fri - Sat)

The criteria were to be displayed at complying/willing liquor outlets. We also consulted with the South African Liquor Traders Association (SALTA) over 18 months about how these criteria could be implemented. SALTA showed a lot of interest in the idea and had no problem with the criteria, but they failed to make any firm commitment to implement these criteria. They attended events that we invited them to and said the right things, but in the end didn't do the right thing.

Since shebeens and taverns operate in a survivalist way, and we recognise that selling alcohol is one way of making a living, we realised that one of the big issues we need to address is job creation, while also improving safety.

A literature review done for us by the Legal Resources Centre found that there were 220 000 outlets selling alcohol in the country, while only 20 000 of these are licensed. So in our campaign we did not take a position against unlicensed outlets, but rather focused on creating safe social places. Our view was that all alcohol sales outlets, whether licensed or not, should be regulated in terms of health and safety, in the same way as any

other business would be. We were willing to work with liquor traders because jobs are important.

As part of our campaign we came up with a plan to create 500 000 new jobs through implementing the criteria for safer social spaces. At the moment most taverns do not sell food and do not have on-site security guards. Merely employing one or two people at each of the 200 000 outlets to make and sell food, as well as one guard, would already create close to 500 000 jobs, bearing in mind that the law allows outlets to stay open from 10h00 until 02h00. Building toilets and walls for all outlets would also contribute by creating short-term jobs for handymen, plumbers and builders.

SALTA said they would introduce this idea to their members, but we have not seen any outcome.

CG: Who did you envisage would pay for these jobs, given that many taverns operate with very small margins?

SK: We were talking to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at national level and at provincial level to the Department of Economic Development, and others. We wanted to find creative approaches, such as combining small taverns into larger enterprises. It is true that there is not a huge profit margin to be made by small taverns, and the risks are high, so we thought that if we could look at combining and growing the businesses we could achieve the safety outcomes and create jobs. But it's not clear if this idea was ever taken forward to traders by SALTA or the liquor boards, and we were unable to pursue this as we had to curtail our campaign.

CG: It seems to me that because of funding constraints you were not able to implement and test a model for improving community safety – and that the result is a rather slow-going attempt to change policy. It also seems that this is the fate of many violence prevention initiatives. Do you think that donors and the state are sufficiently aware of the importance of these kinds of endeavours and the importance of funding them in such a way that they can be done properly? Is there an appetite for violence prevention work?

SK: It is costly to do social mobilisation, in terms of time, human resources and materials. So it's true that in the end we couldn't do what we had hoped to because of a lack of funding support. But it is important to address alcohol-related violence in a holistic and long-term way, as the drivers of these behaviours are multi-pronged and embedded in our society. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Substance Abuse has brought the right departments together and we are hopeful that it will lead to both policy and support for programmatic interventions.

CG: How would you have measured the impact of your campaign?

SK: We were going to get the local communities to go to clinics and police stations and collect their own statistics weekly: how many fights there were, how many people got hurt, how many went to the hospital, and so on. In that way we, and the community participants, would have been able to see if the intervention was working.

As far as advocacy is concerned, we have managed to do a lot of advocacy around policy change focusing on reducing access to alcohol. We found that most provinces operated under one of two liquor acts: Liquor Act 59 of 2003 and Liquor Act 27 of 1989. And we found that the provincial, national and local laws contradicted one another. We focused on lobbying for a comprehensive national policy, the inclusion of the safer social spaces criteria into the legislation, for a link to be made between alcohol and violence, and a national conversation about how we consume alcohol. We have also done our own analysis on the cost of alcohol-related harm. Through that we found that we were spending more on alcohol-related harm than we were earning from tax and excise. So we are lobbying for a tax on the sale of alcohol to be used to set up a national health promotion and development foundation.

CG: Who is doing this lobbying? Only Soul City?

SK: Soul City has worked with partners such as the Medical Research Council and others on this

campaign, so they have also done alcohol research and advocacy work. To advocate for a health promotion foundation, a health promotion and development network was established in 2011. This network is made up of research organisations, advocacy groups and academic institutions. We are lobbying for the establishment of a foundation for health promotion that would be funded by taxes from alcohol and cigarettes. There are international examples from comparable countries of how this can work, including Thai Health (Thailand), Vic Health (Victoria, Australia) and a foundation in Korea.

CG: What is the response of the state so far?

SK: We are still talking about why we need such an intervention. We have made the case that it is in our interest as a country to spend more on prevention than on dealing with the harm caused by violence. We have also highlighted the need to look at funding structures that get the alcohol and tobacco industries to carry the cost of harm caused by their products, rather than the taxpayer carrying the burden, as is currently the case.

CG: Turning to provincial policy, through the Phuza Wize campaign you have also tried to contribute to the development of the Gauteng liquor policy through facilitating public consultation – tell me about that.

SK: What happened is that we were asked to facilitate public consultation around the policy. We felt that it was important to have public participation in the development of the policy. But the public consultation process was afforded very little time – 12 or 14 days, with only five or six days' notice. We tried to get the Gauteng government to extend the period of public consultation, but that didn't happen. They had deadlines that they were unable to shift. But it did mean that proper community consultation was not fully realised through this process. Communities need much more time than this to organise and prepare submissions, and they need support to understand the draft policies and their own role in the process.

Under these constraints, we did work with community organisations and provided minimal training and support to prepare submissions. A challenge we found at the community consultation forums was that there were large numbers of SALTA members wearing branded T-shirts. They had a very loud voice in all the public hearings, which meant that it was difficult for ordinary, unorganised members of the community to speak up about their concerns about the sale of alcohol around them.

As a result, we believe that future public consultations should not only be longer, but that there should be separate consultation forums for those earning a living from the industry and the communities in which they trade. People seemed scared of shebeen owners and felt that they couldn't impact on the behaviour of the owners of liquor outlets without government support.

CG: So where does that leave us in terms of policy in Gauteng and nationally?

SK: The DTI released Draft National Norms and Standards for public comment last year, which are currently with the National Liquor Policy Council.

CG: As far as I was able to see, the Gauteng liquor policy of 2011 is still in draft form. Is that where the process stopped?

SK: That's as far as we were involved in the policy process.

CG: In this edition of the SACQ, Clare Herrick and Andrew Charman argue that 'increased police attention to shebeens in the context of the Liquor Act has not served to reduce their vulnerability to crime, but has rather added another layer of (often) violent confrontation and criminality to the experience of making a living through shebeening'. This draws attention to the potentially serious negative consequences of enforcing alcohol legislation that seeks to regulate the operating conditions of shebeens. If we accept that increasing the safety of both those consuming alcohol and others is of primary

importance, what alternatives are there? Might there be a way of incentivising shebeen owners to increase the safety in and around their establishments?

SK: Our campaign has sought to do that – by implementing the ten conditions for safe public places. They were not punitive. But we needed to work with SALTA and to engage with DTI and other departments such as the South African Police Service (SAPS). Change is required, because communities feel helpless to stop the alcohol-related violence on their own. So while we want to support the right of shebeens and taverners to make a living, we need to be careful not to allow them this right at the expense of the well-being of ordinary families who live in the vicinity of these outlets. We know we need to work with traders, and see them as part of the solution. We thought the best way to do this would be through a national body such as SALTA, but we haven't found much reciprocity. We certainly don't want poor, corrupt policing and know that can cause harm.

CG: Are shebeens the problem – or might the problem rather be the normalisation of violence? In other words, do you think that focusing on reducing and restricting alcohol is the most appropriate way to seek to reduce violence and the related harms?

SK: It's obviously not the only way, but from a public health perspective, reducing availability and misuse of alcohol is one of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendations for reducing violence. The WHO also recommends shifting social norms that support or condone violence, improving parent-child relationships, and gender relations among other things. In our campaign we tried to address several of those. Ultimately a multi-faceted approach is necessary and already overdue, given the violence statistics that we see in our country.