

Partnership to fight high rate of FASD

A GROUNDBREAKING youth development initiative has been launched by Western Cape Social Development MEC Albert Fritz.

The initiative uses the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) to boost the fight against foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) in the West Coast area.

The department is working closely with Landbou Gemeenskap Ontwikkeling (LGO). In April, it provided funding for 15 EPWP posts. LGO has also used its resources to train 15 youngsters and deploy them as community workers in the farming communities in the area.

The community workers work under the supervision of the LGO social worker and

Marvin Charles

its farmer committee. They run activities such as public education, school holiday programmes, leadership development and anti FASD programmes.

The partnership will also see the department's local offices in the region work closely with the LGO to provide social work resources such as child protection and early childhood development services.

The department, through a recent study, determined that there is a high prevalence of FASD in the West Coast which found that 64 children per 1 000 were affected. The rate can also be compared to the findings in the most recent studies conducted

in Kimberley (60/1 000) and in the Witzenberg area (96/1 000). But the highest rate is 122/1 000, which is found in De Aar, making it the highest reported FASD rate in the world.

"FASD poses a major challenge to the development of children and, later, adults. I am proud of the partnership with the department as it brings social services closer to communities," the head manager of LGO, Johan van de Hoven, said.

MEC Fritz said: "We will continue the fight against FASD and all other forms of substance abuse... (and) provide services that tackle drug and alcohol abuse, and create social and economic opportunities for young people."