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Special Programmes brings the taxi industry into the fold...

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The Department embarked on an HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign for taxi operators on July 28.

Mmabatho Mfikwe, emphasised that although we might be driving our own flashy cars today, all of us have at one stage or another been reliant on the industry to commute. “A large majority of black people are products of this often frowned upon industry”, Mfikwe conceded.

As a highlight, taxi operators of all ages were treated to an informative, interactive discussion on HIV/AIDS and STI infection prevention measures. Ms Phuduhudu of the Department of Health & Social Development was on hand to deliver a heart-wrenching presentation on the rate of HIV infections in the province.

Judging from the questions and comments that followed, her presentation definitely did not fall on deaf ears. When tested positive, people should not give in, and depending on their attitude infected people could live well over twenty years in a healthy state, advised Ms Phuduhudu. She said her department is ready and willing to assist the people of the province to fight the scourge.

Ms. D. Jassop of Department of Health & Social Development (EMRS) made a presentation on an array of basic first aid exercises that can be conducted at the scene of an accident, while Reverend Ramadie from Office of the Premier did a presentation on Moral Regeneration. “Empowering you with this skill can potentially save lives”, emphasized Jassop. She added that seventy percent of accidents happen less than 25km from home when we become less vigilant in a familiar environment.

“The reason people still harbour negative attitude towards taxi drivers and the industry as a whole, is largely because the only time people hear about this industry is when something bad has happened. We do not document good stories about the industry”, emphasised Ramadie. He added that people in this industry are no different from the rest of the citizenry, being tempted and tried the same way we all are, they only display openly what our present society has become. He called on all to go back to our roots and practice ‘ubuntu’.

Robert Dintwe and Frans Malate of Bolta Taxi Association and Magogwe United Taxi Association respectively, could not hide their gratitude for government in general and

the Department in particular to have extended a hand of friendship towards the industry. They both agreed that for a long time they felt sidelined and particularly on HIV/AIDS related matters. "We have learned a lot from this workshop", Robert Dintwe said.

"This is only the beginning, the next time you see us, it will not be here in the comfort of our offices, we will go where you are, to you, to your taxi ranks and continue to spread the message of hope for those who are affected and infected", Mfikwe concluded.

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