

## **ADM AND UGANDAN PARTNERSHIP BEGINS TO BEAR FRUIT.**

**By Judy Ngoloyi**

**EAST LONDON 25/3/08:** A delegation of twenty people hailing from Kampala Central Division Council in Uganda is on a week long visit to Amathole District Municipality (ADM). The main objective of the visit is learning and sharing expertise concerning challenges currently facing the two municipalities. This visit is an outcome of the Memorandum Of Understanding ( MOU) signed by the two municipalities in 2005.



**(Picture taken by Akhona Ngqinambi)**

Sketching the background of the MOU, ADM Portfolio Head of Health, Councilor Helen Neale-May said it all started in Thailand, Bangkok, during the International Aids conference which took place four years ago. She said that was when she realized how well the Ugandans were handling the HIV and Aids pandemic in their country. Neale-May said that following the Thailand conference, it was decided that the ADM would undertake an exploratory visit to Uganda and thus a proposal was submitted to the ADM's Executive Mayor, Alderman Sakhumzi Somyo and the Eastern Cape Aids Council which received overwhelming support.

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Cllr Helen Neal-May**

She said: four years ago a delegation of 18 people from the ADM, other district municipalities and members of the House of Traditional Leaders in the province visited Uganda. “People in Uganda convey the messages of HIV and Aids in a very creative way through role-playing. People tell their stories through singing and dancing and they do a lot of educational training in this way.”

Neale-May said after various interactions with their Ugandan counterparts they discovered that there was a lot that they could learn and share in several aspects, including HIV and AIDS programmes. She said the Post Test Clubs programme was one of the outcomes of the partnership and is currently working very well in the ADM.

“People are encouraged to test their status and one does not have to be HIV positive in order to be part of Post Test Clubs. We also learnt about the role that politicians could play in the fight against HIV and Aids,” she said.

Neale-May said one of the biggest challenges that are facing municipalities throughout the country in their Integrated Development Strategies ( IDPs) and performance review is to reduce the HIV prevalence rates. **“This is exactly what we are hoping to do as ADM, to bring the HIV and Aids prevalence rate down in the district.** In Uganda people are taught how to become self sufficient, especially the second economy, and that is one of the areas that our Local Economic Development ( LED) section looked at. It’s time to bring that entrepreneur spirit into our youth,” Neale-May said.

Chairperson of Health and Environment in Kampala Central Division Council, Cllr Geraldine Misanvu said one special area that they would like to zero in on is the income-generating approach. She said they have realized that a number of people that are affected by the pandemic have lost their jobs because of the stigma.

“One special thing that we want to share with ADM is for communities to support each other. We also want to encourage communities to embark on self-initiated small businesses which are registered at the municipality level, so that when it comes to loans or other schemes they are recognized by the government. It is through these organized small businesses that municipalities can support them. In this way local government can also be more accountable in terms of its procurement spending,” she said.

She also said another area that they want to share with the ADM is the area of enjoyment. “Since some people have stress caused by the HIV pandemic they find it difficult to enjoy life. Social interaction brings them joy in life, that is why we have things like drama and music. When they come together they share stories and that is self-counseling,” she said.

Misanvu said in an effort of supporting each other in Uganda when job opportunities are created, priority is given to people who are HIV positive, like the orphans, widowers and the widows.

Uganda has successfully reduced its HIV prevalence rate from 35% in 1998 to the current level of under 6%.

Ends.