

*Minster Dan Plato*

*Mayor De Lille*

*Friends/Colleagues and especially to you, residents Elsie's River* I am delighted to be part of this celebration with you today. This launch is not only a significant celebration for the Elsie's River Multi-Stakeholder Forum, but for me and my board at the Open Society Foundation for South Africa, it represents a joint success, because this event illustrates and celebrates how multi-agency partnerships can be formed with communities, government and donors as key partners in creating safer and more stable communities.

Without going into too much detail, indulge me for just a minute as I remind us all about how this project came to be.

The Elsie's River Multi-Stakeholder Forum is one of three safety forums that were established by the OSF-SA. This project was the result of our collective concern as a nation about the heavy toll that crime was taking on all our lives and importantly for us as a Foundation was the troubling issue that while we as a Foundation have as our mission the building of open societies, crime posed the biggest threat to the creation and institutionalisation of an open society in SA. But while we see the need for addressing this major issue through a variety of ways, we were very interested in particular in testing the idea of engaging in a small pilot project that tested how crime and safety are essentially two sides of the same coin.

For many of us in this room, who have worked in the community development sector, you will recall our own joy when in the 2006 National Crime Prevention Strategy, there was explicit mention and action envisioned to integrate short-term law enforcement measures to keep communities safe, with broader safety concerns relevant to both community needs and long-term crime prevention. Sadly the practicalities of balancing these two approaches, of short term law enforcement with a long term crime prevention agenda were never fully realised.

For the Foundation though, this unrealised goal in the National Crime Prevention Strategy did not deter us and we set about in 2008, to test how best to give effect to our own dream that we would test, even if we failed, the idea of working with local communities and provincial and local government on how best to test and promote

our vital agenda that crime prevention and safety promotion in communities will have a visible and beneficial effect on people in this country. As you know from having worked with us intensely for the last 3 years, we were interested in issues of community participation in governance and the extent to which civil society, and especially local communities, can participate in the implementation of provincial priorities and safety strategies through locally focused safety plans.

In 2008, the OSF-SA entered into partnership with the provincial Departments of Community Safety in Gauteng, the Eastern Cape and of course the Western Cape. The three departments took the first step of selecting one site per province for piloting, and Elsie's River was identified in the Western Cape. Over the last three years, the OSF-SA has invested human and financial resources to work with the community of Elsie's River to realise and implement a vision and an action plan for a safer Elsie's River.

Here, our support has been directed towards various projects described in the Elsie's River safety plan, this included for example the Hlayiseka School Safety Project at three at-risk schools in the community by the CJCP; a drug and alcohol awareness programme at primary schools conducted by SANCA; and an Alcohol Awareness programme (Booza TV) by UCT Public Health. In 2010, we awarded a grant to Rainbow Circle Films for a film-making project with students at five High Schools, and a Mediation Project for the Multi-Stakeholder Forum offered by ACDS at the University of Stellenbosch. In terms of project learning, these grant making activities have enabled short-term project deliverables, as well as enabled the forum to demonstrate the effectiveness of the safety plans.

We have now reached the end of a journey with you, and while we may be anxious and even sad that our joint journey is nearing an end, your journey begins. Yours is one that will see you as key community stakeholders move into the driving seat, to steer your ship safely into calm and happy waters and you will do so with confidence and the skill that we have tried to impart to you. You will do so collectively with the Western Cape provincial government at your side and the nation rooting for you.

We have so much to celebrate and build on already, an already established Elsie's River Multi-Stakeholder Forum, comprised of a group of dedicated individuals

representing government departments and community organisations; an Elsie River-owned safety plan which was drafted and adopted by the Stakeholder forum; and interventions that speak to some of the safety concerns highlighted in this safety plan.

The Foundation will, based on our own learning and practice from Elsie River, Nomphumelelo and Orange Farm, become, with you, greater policy advocates for the promotion of crime and safety promotion. We will use our own leverage as an international donor organisation to lobby local, provincial, national and even international governments and stakeholders to learn and share our experiences here. Already, we have an opportunity to do this with the recent release of the Community Safety Policy by the Civilian Secretariat of Police. This is going to afford us the opportunity to share some of the many lessons, good and bad, that we have had the privilege to learn here in Elsie River.

I want to pay special tribute to the Western Cape Department of Community Safety and the City of Cape Town in partnering with the OSF-SA in this very important initiative. You have been worthy and trusting partners and we should celebrate this as our collective success. Let me also thank Sean Tait. He has been a diligent and passionate project leader. I also extend a word of thanks to the various service providers for their work in adding critical value to the project.

Finally, let me extend the best for last, to the Elsie River Multi-Stakeholder Forum, you have been a tough but very worthy partner in our journey. Thank you for your passion and dedication and your unrelenting commitment to build a safe, free and harmonious community in Elsie River, where hard work is rewarded and dreams realised. Your own journey as community leaders has now begun in earnest as you take this project forward to a new phase and new heights.