



MEDIA STATEMENT

The owners of Enyobeni tavern must be charged with culpable homicide for deaths of the 21 teens

Johannesburg – Monday, 27 June 2022: loveLife sends its deepest, heartfelt condolences to the parents, families and friends of the teenagers that tragically died at a local tavern in East London, Eastern Cape. In the early morning of Sunday, 26 June – parents and residents at Scenery Park woke up to the devastating news and a gruesome scene with reported deaths of 21 children aged between 13 and 17 – some of them, their own and to some, members of their families.

loveLife CEO, Dr Linda Ncube-Nkomo CA(SA) PhD said: “The loss of young lives, as seen in the Enyobeni tavern incident is a tragedy of mammoth proportions and the worst nightmare of any parent. I wish to send our condolences to the parents and families who lost their loved ones. Losing a child has to be the hardest experience that any parent can go through and we, at loveLife hope that they will have access to the necessary counselling and support to help them get through this loss.”

As we try to wrap our minds around the circumstances that led to the deaths of these children, the question that comes to mind is why the tavern was selling alcohol to under-age children in the first place.

loveLife calls on all the law enforcement agencies to prioritise the investigation into the deaths of these children. loveLife challenges SAPS to see to it that if the owner of Enyobeni tavern is found to have allowed underage drinking in their tavern – they be charged with culpable homicide. This will send a strong message to those that similarly breach the conditions of their operating licences that are clear about not selling alcohol to children under the age of 18.

Importantly, liquor regulatory bodies must reflect on the deaths of these young people and recognise that they have a bigger responsibility to be proactive in curbing underage drinking – an issue that if not nipped in the bud – will deepen the country’s social disintegration.

loveLife supports the demands for laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol to children to be strengthened as expressed by the citizens during public hearings on the Children's Amendment Bill in Kimberley to the Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Social Development last November.

Furthermore, loveLife believes that the lawmakers' call for additional police to be deployed to taverns and shebeens to ensure owners are not selling alcohol to underage customers should be the most urgent interventions required to prevent another Enyobeni incident from happening. Research confirms that children's access to alcohol both inside and outside their homes is not sufficiently monitored and is contributing to increased risky behaviour including abuse of alcohol and substance. With the use of nyaope ranking high across our townships, and a high rate of school drop-out, school going children have become prime clients for taverns and shebeens operating near schools.

"Enyobeni tavern is in a residential area, therefore it is reasonable to believe that residents would have been aware of the underage drinking taking place at their doorstep. For incidents like these to stop occurring, we need to actively call and involve law enforcement agencies when the law is being broken right under our noses. We call on South Africans to blow the whistle on crime affecting our youth. An incident like this one, is one too many, and should never be allowed to happen again," concluded Dr Ncube-Nkomo.

loveLife urges parents and guardians to actively see to the safety of their children and do more to educate them on the dangers of alcohol abuse. Underage drinking is a looming crisis that requires everyone in society to play their part, and those charged with responsibility to protect the children must be held accountable when in breach of their duties.

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About loveLife

The New loveLife Trust known as "loveLife", is a South African non-profit youth organisation that was established in 1999. loveLife's vision is to promote holistic youth health for all young people between 10-24 years. The organisation seeks to ensure that young people are empowered with information that enables them to make informed decisions related to their overall health and to identify opportunities using a peer-led model to address challenges they

face. These challenges include: HIV/AIDS, violence, joblessness, rising mental health issues leading to suicide and substance abuse, lack of access to jobs and economic opportunities, poor basic education system and cost of tertiary and a public health care system that is not designed to cater for the needs of adolescents and youth.