

Hanover Park residents speak-up

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Residents gathered at the Hanover Park community centre last week to discuss their concerns.

The community dialogue, which was held on Friday September 26, was called by Africa Unite, an NPO, which is human rights and youth empowerment-focused. It works with youth from different backgrounds to prevent conflicts, enhance social cohesion and promote socio-economic development.

Although the meeting started about an hour later than scheduled due to the poor turnout, when things finally got under very important issues were raised by the community.

Africa Unite is an organisation that works with young people and is driven by young people. They look at the challenges young people are faced with and try to get the help from the whole community to bring about the change that is required.

The meeting was held as part of Africa Unite's community conflict mediation project which aims to strengthen grassroots capacities in communities that are in conflict to find sustainable solutions to their daily challenges.

The dialogue was a follow-up to the community assessment Africa Unite youth peer educators conducted with local community stakeholders in Hanover Park.

The organisation's Brilliant Nyambi said young people don't always have the power to change things.

"We need to find the leaders in the community who can help them."

He said it is important to get the community to work as a unit and to understand that they had the power to solve their own problems.

"The community can find the solution," he said.

He said that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the challenges in the community, among which are the drop-out rate, drug and alcohol abuse, division in the community, poverty and employment, lack of activities, gangsterism, teen pregnancy, peer pressure, education, lack of eco-



■ Brilliant Nyambi of Africa Unite addresses the meeting.

omic development, crime and the lack of skills development facilities.

After the residents raised their concerns, Mr Nyambi asked them to decide which of the challenges were the most pressing.

It was decided that drugs, gangsterism and education challenges were the most pressing.

Those in attendance were disappointed at the turnout and it was suggested the ward councillor, NGOs, religious leaders, local and provincial SAPS, the department of social development, community leaders, Ceasefire and school representatives be present at future meetings.

"All of the challenges are very important and inter-linked for the Hanover Park community, however, these challenges need to be discussed deeply, one at a time, to find a common solution," said Mr Nyambi.

A volunteer task team was formed at the meeting. The proposed date for the next meeting is Wednesday October 15, at a time and venue yet to be confirmed. For details call 081 333 7665 or 021 461 6551.