

**PRESS RELEASE: FAStrap© Awareness walk from De Aar to Kimberley:  
17 – 24 October 2011**

## 1. Background

South Africa has the highest reported Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) prevalence rate in the world, with the highest rate recorded in De Aar, Northern Cape (122/1000 of the population). This means that 12% of the children of school going age in De Aar have FAS, the most severe form of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders/FASD. FASD (and FAS) is caused by maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Alcohol abuse is often linked to ignorance, low educational level, disempowerment, lack of recreational activities, unemployment and poverty. A child with FAS has permanent brain and possibly other organ damage and will have life-long learning and behavioural problems. An estimated 2 million people in South Africa have full-blown FAS and another 6 million might be affected by FASD (lesser form of brain and organ damage).

The Foundation for Alcohol Research (FARR) was the first organization in SA to raise the concern about FAS and to undertake community research, prevention and management programmes. FARR is still the only South African based organization with the expertise to diagnose FASD and to develop management programmes for people with FASD and FAS.

## 2. First ever reduction of FAS rate in the world

FARR has been working in De Aar since 2002. During the past 4 years the FARR programme in De Aar has received sponsorship from the Tshikululu Social Investment Fund (main sponsor), ARA (the Industry's Association for Responsible Alcohol Use) and various local organizations like Rotary, EmpowaGrinacker, the Department of Social Development, etc. As a result of this funding, the FARR prevention and management programmes and the dedication of especially the pregnant women, the FAS prevalence rate has dropped with 30%. This is the first ever reported decrease of a FAS community prevalence rate in the world. The model that FARR has developed in De Aar is currently being refined for publication and will soon be available for roll out to other communities. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also expressed interest in this model.

## 3. The FAStrap© Awareness Walk

To raise the awareness about FAS and the successes of the De Aar community in the fight against FAS, the FARR CEO, Leana Olivier and the De Aar FARR Project Manager, Lian Drotsky, are going to undertake a 6-day 290km walk from De Aar to Kimberley on 17 – 24 October 2011. They will carry a message of goodwill and support from the Mayor of the Emthanjeni Municipality, De Aar, Mr Sthonga, to the Mayor of the Sol Plaatjie Municipality, Kimberley, Ms Ntlangula. The

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### Foundation for Alcohol Related Research

Association incorporated under Section 21

Registration Number: 1997/00190/08

VAT Registration: 4610166615

HWSeta Accreditation: HW591PA1011091

Non Profit Organisation Reference No: 089-368

BBBEE: BRSE004022

PBO: 18/11/13/536

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Directors: Prof DL Viljoen (Chairperson), Prof JP van Niekerk, Dr L Bhengu, Mr AGP Botha, Ms A Sheik, Dr M Urban, Ms L Olivier

FAStrap© kick-off ceremony is taking place on 17 October 2011 at 09h00 at the FARR/Joan Wertheim Centre, De Aar. Mr Sthonga's message of goodwill will be handed over to Ms Ntlangula at the Sol Plaatjie office in Kimberley on 24 October 2011. Both the local MEC of Social Services, Mr Botes, and Ms Ntlangula will be speakers at this event. The main sponsor of the FAStrap© Awareness Walk is Mainstream Renewable Power, SA.

FARR is starting a FAS prevention project in Galeshewe and Roodepan, Kimberley in 2012, in partnership with the Department of Social Service. The FAStrap© walk will also launch this initiative.

#### **4. Public involvement and support**

The FAStrap© Awareness Walk was officially launched on 9 September 2011 (International FAS-day) at Beyerskloof, Stellenbosch with a 3-hour direct broadcast on 'Radio Sonder Grense'. This morning was sponsored by the FAITH Fund and the FAITH Fund Director, Beyers Truter and some of his staff, walked a few kilometres in support of the FAStrap©. Members of the public were invited to show their support by walking 9km. ('Nine' symbolizing the 9 alcohol free months of pregnancy to ensure the birth of a FAS-free child.) The target was to mobilize 111 people from 9 September to 17 October to walk 999km in total. To date more than 400 members of the public have already participated with a total of 4 100km been reached. Visit the FARR website [www.farr-sa.co.za](http://www.farr-sa.co.za) to view the FAStrap© barometer and to register for free to support this cause.

The two brave walkers will post their progress and awareness activities enroute on the FAStrap© Facebook link (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/FAStrap/278139102211975>), please like this page to receive regular updates and/or to post your comments.

#### **5. Media support**

The FAStrap© campaign already received wide media coverage in September. We hereby request TV-, radio stations and newspaper to support FARR in this awareness campaign in an effort to raise universal community awareness regarding the importance of FAS prevention in South Africa.

**For more information, please contact:**

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**CEO: FARR**

**Tel: 021-6862646 of 083 275 0202**

**Ina Viljoen**

**PRO**

**Tel: 083 463 4090**

*Please see the attached FAStrap© programme*

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## 290 km FAStrap© Awareness Walk Programme

17 October	09h00 09h30 17h00	Kick-off with Mayor at the FARR/Joan Wertheim Centre, De Aar De Aar Community members support the campaign by walking the first 2km FAS-programme with farm workers and community members at Diepfontein
18 October	05h00 13h30	Departure FAS-programme with community members, Phillipstown
19 October	05h00 12h00 – 15h00	Departure FAS-programmes at Youth Centre and three other venues, Petrusville
20 October	05h00 14h00	Departure FAS-programme at clinic with community workers, pregnant women and mothers, Van der Kloof
21 October	05h00 14h00	Departure FAS-programme with community members, Orania
22 October	05h00 14h00	Departure FAS-programme with farmworkers and community members, Hopetown
23 October	05h00	Departure
24 October	05h00	Departure Arrival in Kimberley and handing over ceremony to the MEC, Social Services and the Mayor (awaiting confirmation of time)

FOUNDATION FOR ALCOHOL RELATED RESEARCH

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