

# Tipple sales need more policing, says alcohol advocacy group

**SBONGILE NKOSI**

AS THE festive season approaches, some South Africans are likely to be spending year-end bonuses on booze in what the World Health Organisation (WHO) has dubbed one of Africa's hardest-drinking nations.

"It is the festive season, and with a large number of Christmas parties and the availability of bonuses, people will consume more alcohol," says Savera Kalideen, advocacy manager of Phuzza Wize, a campaign to encourage responsible drinking.

Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication heads the campaign.

This is not news to alcohol companies, who spend half their annual advertising budgets mar-

keting alcohol between October and December, according to Kalideen. She says that as South Africans prepare to party, the nation should be angry that not more is being done to curb binge drinking and illegal liquor outlets.

Unregulated, some of these outlets may also be selling to minors.

Jabulile Nkosi from Soweto prepares annually for festive drinking with the help of her alcohol stokvel. Her monthly contribution of R400 ensures she receives R4 800 in booze just in time for the festive season.

"The reality is we drink more during the festive season than any other time of the year, so planning for it will save costs," Nkosi says.

Joining the stokvel means Nkosi does not stress about arriving empty-handed at functions. She

## 'We drink more during the festive season – planning for it saves costs'

admits she is unlikely to finish her almost R5 000 in alcohol and will probably store some for her sister's wedding in May.

Lindiwe Matona says she and friends spend about R300 a month to stock up on alcohol throughout the year in a similar stokvel.

In December, members get four bottles of hard liquor, which some members say last about three weeks. For Matona, the arrangement helps her keep up with festive expectations around drinking while saving her salary for Christ-

mas gifts and school fees, she says.

A WHO report released in May defined heavy or binge drinking as consuming at least four beers or more in one sitting. The report found that about 4 percent of South Africans had drunk heavily at least once in the past month. This was about four times higher in men.

Heavy drinking is also a major contributor to violence, domestic abuse and road accidents, says Kalideen.

She feels the government and the alcohol industry aren't doing enough to curb the practice by, for instance, cracking down on illegal shebeens. She says liquor outlets can sell alcohol only between 10am and 2am, but unlicensed taverns often sell outside these hours.

"South Africans are not making enough noise about the way alcohol

is sold in this country," she says.

These outlets also sometimes sell to minors.

In the farming community of Makwassie, North West, cashiers at Dikgomo's Tavern say they are just following the owner's orders when they sell to underage children.

The principal of the local Leruntse Lesedi Secondary School, Moeketsi Koaho, says alcohol and drug abuse among pupils are a problem. This shows in their school work.

"Learners do not want to attend school regularly and that has a negative impact on our (matric) pass rate," says Koaho, adding that he believes substance abuse among pupils fuels petty crime. – Health-e News, with additional reporting by *Kagisho Modise*