



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

FAITH LEADERS UNITE AT SAAPA SA G20 SUMMIT: “THE TRUE COST OF ALCOHOL”

Faith communities call for urgent alcohol harm reduction, stronger taxes, and government accountability amid rising crisis. Faith leaders from across the nation have sounded a powerful moral and social alarm: *South Africa is drowning in alcohol harm and silence is no longer an option.*

Gathered at the **G20 Social Summit on 30 October 2025**, hosted at Baitun Noor Lenasia, by the **Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance South Africa (SAAPA SA)** under its national campaign “*The True Cost of Alcohol*,” leading voices from the **Islamic, Hindu, and Christian faiths** joined researchers, recovery advocates, and civil society partners to confront the country’s spiralling alcohol crisis head-on.

Under the banner “**Financing the Future: Alcohol Harm Reduction through Health Taxes for Sustainable, Just, and Inclusive Development**,” the dialogue formed part of South Africa’s G20 Social Summit series, aligning with the **World Health Organization’s Global Alcohol Action Plan** and the “**3 by 35**” goal to reduce harmful alcohol use by 35% by 2035.

A Moral Emergency Demanding Action

Facilitated by **Mme Mboe of the Central Drug Authority (CDA)**, the summit featured diverse faith and civil society leaders including **Muhammed Ahmed Bulbulia** (Jamiatul Ulaama SA), **Moulana Mahmood Mahomed** (SANHA Halaal Board), **Pratiba Daya** (Brahma Kumaris), **Dayalan Veeragaloo** (Progressive Tamil Movement), **Reverend Mangaliso Dukada** (Izenzo Acts Community Church), **David Friler** and **Chene Beukes** (Mon Ami Trauma Troops), **Xolani Dlwathi** (Moral Regeneration Movement), **Zarina Motala** (Nishtara Recovery and Wellness Centre), **Dan Bhervia** (Art of Living), **Shireen Ebrahim** (#ImStaying), and **Maurice Smithers** (WASSA).

Together they issued a clear message: *alcohol harm has become one of South Africa’s most destructive social epidemics, tearing through families, fuelling gender-based violence, trapping youth in addiction, and costing the nation billions every year.*

The **World Health Organization** confirms that harmful alcohol use is among the top five risk factors for death and disability globally, claiming **three million lives annually**. In South Africa, alcohol contributes to **more than 60,000 deaths every year**, with the **South African Medical Research Council** linking it to over **55% of road fatalities**, **40% of gender-based violence cases**, and a staggering **R165 billion** in social and economic losses, nearly **10% of the national health budget**.

Faith as a Force for Reform

“Every faith tradition teaches the sanctity of life. Yet, every day, we bury another youth lost to alcohol harm,” said SAAPA. “Faith cannot be silent while families drown.”



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Faith leaders agreed that moral courage and community leadership must go together with public policy. SAAPA SA called for **increased excise taxes on alcohol, stricter regulation of marketing and sponsorship, and the removal of industry influence from policy spaces.**

Studies from **WITS University's PRICELESS SA** confirm that raising alcohol taxes by just **10% can save thousands of lives each year** and significantly reduce alcohol-related hospital admissions and violence. The **WHO** recognises alcohol taxation as one of its "best buy" interventions are cost-effective, evidence-based, and essential for sustainable development.

A Collective Call to Government and Society

SAAPA SA urged policymakers to act with urgency and principle. "Every bottle that is sold without accountability represents another life lost, another child orphaned, another community broken. Increasing health taxes is not just an economic choice, it is a moral obligation. South Africa must choose people over profit."

Faith and civil society leaders committed to using their churches, temples, mosques, and community networks to drive awareness, support recovery, and demand stronger national policy. The summit closed with a united call:

"Together, our faiths can turn compassion into prevention. South Africa cannot afford another lost generation."

About SAAPA SA

The **Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance South Africa (SAAPA SA)** works to advance evidence-based alcohol policies that protect health, reduce harm, and promote social justice. Through its national campaign "**The True Cost of Alcohol**," SAAPA SA mobilises government, civil society, academia, and faith-based sectors to align with WHO's global alcohol reduction goals and achieve sustainable, inclusive development.



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The True Cost of Alcohol

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