

Rural girls excel at Giyani science faire

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Mpho Dube

GIRLS FROM villages around Giyani had the chance to show off their science skills at a science faire at the Giyani Education Multi-Purpose Centre on Friday.

The science faire was an opportunity for girls to compete in a 'science expo' environment and to demonstrate their skills. At least 47 girls have been working on science projects over the past two months. Projects included investigating the use of fruits as conductors of electricity, to investigating the impact of tuberculosis in the Mopani district and what traditional healers could do in this regard.

The faire was sponsored by well-known funding agency in science education and innovation, the Shuttleworth Foundation, and was the culmination of a series of weekend sessions that started in May 2003.

At the sessions the girls were exposed to a multi-disciplinary programme that included life skills, computer literacy, electronics and technology, career guidance, problem solving and subject specific skills in mathematics, physical science and biology.

Research done by the project coordinator, Ms Elmary Buis, during 2002 highlighted the need for such a programme. "There is a steady decrease in the number of girls doing science

subjects from Grade 10 to 12, and the tendency is for them to switch to standard grade when they reach matric. At the Science Expo held in Giyani last year, less than five per cent of the learners participating were girls."

Buis also researched the need for special science programmes for girl learners.

In a paper she delivered at the University of the North last year, she highlighted that girls learn differently than boys, especially when it comes to exploring technology.

She advocates for short interventions, where girls can be exposed to science and technology in the absence of boys.

