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Nurturing resilience during the COVID-19 crisis

Yeukai Muruzi (Reliable House social worker: Unit for Community Engagement, University of Pretoria)

General overview: Reliable House, Hatfield

Reliable House is a transitional shelter located in Hatfield, Pretoria. It renders services to men who are homeless and those struggling with substance abuse using the harm reduction approach. The centre runs as a partnership between the City of Tshwane, the University of Pretoria and the Community Orientated Substance Use Programme (COSUP). Staff members responsible for everyday operations consist of a team of two social workers, a clinical associate, a psychologist intern, peer worker and two centre managers. The centre provides shelter to about 25 persons affected with homelessness and substance abuse.



However, the COVID-19 crisis has hit the whole world, leading to our nation implementing the lockdown to minimise the spread of the virus and to protect lives. As such, various communities were affected on different levels, including Reliable House. There was a significant shift from our everyday living and operations. Despite the challenges faced, our staff has been working hard to support our service users in ways that will enable them to cope, thrive and sustain themselves during this period.

Ways of coping and support rendered to the service users

Bio-psycho-social support

The social workers provide individual counselling for enhancement of the general well-being and understanding of each person's different needs. Thereafter, referrals can be made for further required assistance; for example, service users with health care needs are referred to the clinical associate on the site, with referrals to access needed medication from hospitals.

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Apart from individual counselling, small support groups are held with precautions taken, such as wearing a mask and keeping distance. Discussions usually concern healthcare issues such as preventative measures for COVID-19. It is an environment where service users experience a sense of belonging and commonality and learn from each other how to tackle challenges. Social workers facilitate the groups and provide community education surrounding pressing matters such as COVID-19; hence, the service users keep engaged and informed about current affairs around our nation. Information is provided on support services available from the government such as the temporary unemployment grant for the vulnerable. Frequent debriefing sessions are done during the small support groups with the purpose of discussing how service users can better adjust to lockdown regulations in a less stressful manner, for instance, making use of the centre resources available such as the library.

The social workers facilitate preservation of family relations among the service users, thus enabling them to keep in contact with family members or any concerned relatives. Such intervention is done through the provision of community education on the importance of enhancing and strengthening family.



Community involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dr Martina Jordaan (Senior lecturer: Community-Based Project Module)

To achieve the outcomes of the compulsory undergraduate course Community-based Project Module (code: JCP) of the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and IT, students must work 40 hours in the community. This academic year there are 1 909 students enrolled for the module. With the lockdown linked to COVID-19, the JCP students experienced a challenge in completing their 40 hours, but in collaboration with the communities, many of them found creative ways to do their fieldwork.

Several students are assisting teachers with online teaching. Students assisted with Google Classroom-developed YouTube videos and PowerPoint presentations and taught learners via WhatsApp. Schools that they have been helping include Palm Grove High School in Benoni, Tsako Thabo Secondary School in Mamelodi, Blue Hills College in Midrand, and Laerskool Menlopark, Laerskool Queenswood and Pretoria Secondary School in Pretoria. Other students developed YouTube videos focusing on specific topics in the curriculum and shared them with the learners.

Two students, David de Villiers and Kian Strydom also assisted PEN non-profit organisation (NPO) shelters and communities across Tshwane by developing an app for use by the Tshwane Homelessness Forum. The purpose of the app is to assist workers in their management of shelter needs and supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic, so that they can optimally provide for and assist their communities.

Ongoing projects include students assisting with the making of masks and visors for schools, clinics and NPOs that deliver them to the communities. Students who worked





Students working online

on their project during lockdown reflected on their role during the COVID-19 pandemic and provided an overview of their views on social responsibility in this time of global crisis.

Reflecting on her project so far, Nishsai Veerappa, a second-year BCom (Informatics) student, said she had a newfound appreciation for teachers. *'I did not realise how difficult a teacher's job is, especially in the current pandemic. Learners rely on these presentations to learn the work that they should have learnt in their classroom'.*

Emile Asari, a second-year Civil Engineering student, indicated that *'as a group we have learned the effect the COVID-19 pandemic has on the world and the strain it has put on hospitals around the world, and how it is so important for people to continue social distancing, to stay at home and to wear masks and use hand sanitiser to protect themselves and other people from getting the COVID-19 virus'.*

Thomas Kabutz, a second-year Mechanical Engineering student, reflected: *'I am doing this project because I enjoy crafting and making things [helping indirectly] a lot more than interacting with people [helping directly]. Due to the ongoing pandemic, my plans of offering a robotics course have collapsed, and I have ended up doing something that I enjoy a lot more. So far, I have learned to optimise the making of the masks. The time to make one mask is less than half what it originally was'.*

Jano Esterhuizen, a second-year Electronic Engineering student, reported *'the youth is the most influential group in our society because of their abundance of energy. Therefore, we as the youth have the power to set the standards for the future. The JCP project of the University of Pretoria made me realise how much need there is for volunteering work in our communities. The small deeds that we as youth do [which do not require much of us] can make a massive impact on other people in need'.*

Community engagement news: Faculty of Veterinary Science

Dr Quixi Sonntag (Community Engagement Coordinator, Faculty of Veterinary Science)

The Faculty of Veterinary Science has embraced community engagement as an essential part of its academic programmes for over a decade. We do our best to integrate community engagement into teaching and learning as well as research.

Community engagement activities occur mainly during the third year of the BVSc degree (veterinary science) and the first year of BVetNurs (veterinary nursing), and then again in the final year of each degree (BVSc VI and BVetNurs III). All the community engagement activities are linked to academic modules, aligned to appropriate learning outcomes, and assessed accordingly.

During the final year, most of the community engagement activities involve practical clinical training in a variety of settings, including our two satellite clinics in Mamelodi and Hluvukani, Mpumalanga. Under the supervision of lecturers, students also visit farmers in the areas surrounding Onderstepoort, where they facilitate primary animal health care. Emerging farmers, in

particular, benefit from a holistic approach, which enables them to learn about nutrition, disease prevention, internal and external parasite management, recognition of signs of disease, understanding of environmental factors that play a role in animal disease, and humane handling of animals.

The clinics in Mamelodi and Hluvukani are both equipped with surgical theatres and basic diagnostic equipment, with Mamelodi treating mainly dogs and cats under the leadership of Dr Jean Rudman, and Hluvukani, being in a more rural area, dealing with a wide variety of species such as goats, cattle, donkeys, chickens, pigs, dogs and wildlife, with Dr Louise Biggs in charge.



The community engagement activities that occur earlier in the academic programmes, before students have learned clinical skills, focus on people skills. The students are matched up with learners from a range of schools in Mamelodi, Hammanskraal, Makapanstad and elsewhere. In groups of about five, they engage with learners to find out more about their experiences and perceptions and share interesting information related to animals and veterinary science with them. In future, our focus will shift to capacitating teachers and involving

students as facilitators for the teachers. The umbrella topic for the school engagements is rabies prevention. Rabies, a neglected tropical disease, kills in excess of 55 000 people annually, mostly in Africa and Asia, and is completely preventable through the vaccination of dogs. The disease has a 100% mortality rate. We encourage our students to be rabies activists and embrace this One Health concept to raise awareness of the role of animals in human health.

In preparation for this activity, the students have contact sessions where they learn about engaging with scholars in order to communicate their message effectively and at the appropriate level. They are also exposed to the concepts of community development, social justice, humane education, and participatory engagement. The students organise their visits to the schools themselves and have to plan and implement an engagement that aligns with the participants, who are of different cultures, ages and socio-economic backgrounds. They produce a visual report on their activity and are assessed on this assignment.

Our students are also involved with non-curricular community engagement. The student representative body, Onderstepoort Veterinary and Para-Veterinary Student Committee (OPVSC) arranges a collaborative One Health project with the students from Health Sciences in a disadvantaged community in Pretoria twice a year. Educational

activities for children complement basic primary animal health care for the resident pets, and of course primary medical care for the human residents. The Veterinary Students Community Outreach (VetSCO) organises several activities annually in a variety of communities to assist people with primary animal health care services, often through collaboration with local non-profit organisations.

Although 2020 has been turned upside down by the lockdown, we still hope to complete most of our community activities before the end of the year. Usually, our third-year student activities conveniently coincide with Mandela Day. This year, we will simply celebrate Mandela Day later in the year and will be able to benefit from the fact that World Rabies Day is celebrated in late September. Since our students will not be able to physically visit schools this year, we have re-imagined our community engagement programme and adapted to an online format, with the aim of still providing meaningful experiential learning opportunities for the students as well as making a real contribution to a real community.

At Onderstepoort, we are proud of our legacy of community engagement in practice and constantly strive to improve our knowledge and skills to make a meaningful contribution to community well-being in South Africa.



Enhancing linkages and the flow of information between the University of Pretoria and smallholder farmers

Richard Hay and Michael van der Laan



In 1965 Guatemalan poet and revolutionary Otto René Castillo published *Intelectuales Apolíticos*, which critiqued his nation's academics' search for meaning only within the confines of its ivory tower while ignoring the plight of the people mired in poverty around it. The first stanza translates as follows: One day the apolitical intellectuals of our land will be interrogated by the poorest of people. They will be asked what they did while their community was extinguished, like a sweet fire, small and alone.

As part of the practical component of the second-year course Sustainable Crop Production and Agroclimatology, students have been connecting with the community by creating media items designed to facilitate the exchange of information between the University, smallholder farmers, and home gardeners. The idea is to combat misinformation by creating scientifically sound content to help communities grow their own food more efficiently and sustainably. This content is shared and consumed using a Facebook page called Ingesta: Farming for the Future (www.facebook.com/IngestaFarming). Building on this work, the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences is embarking on a multidisciplinary campaign to offer its collective expertise in the aid and promotion of home and community food gardens. The Tšhemo ya Setšhaba campaign, which translates from sePedi as 'vegetable gardens of the people', aims to aid in alleviating both seen and hidden hunger at community levels.

The creation of Moja Gabedi in Hatfield, with its urban forest and community vegetable garden initiative, provides a physical base for Tšhemo ya Setšhaba. Many fruit trees such as pomegranates, figs, and citrus have

already been planted, and student-tended vegetable gardens have been established (refer to the photos). The site relies on groundwater from a recently drilled borehole, with plans in motion to establish a swale and rain garden to divert storm water from the surrounding buildings into the soil to replenish the aquifer.

While COVID-19 has stalled progress due to restraints on movement, it has also highlighted the fragility of the social safety net meant to catch us in times of crisis. At a state level, South Africa remains a food-secure nation, but to those of us privileged to not have to worry about where our next meal will come from, the deeply entrenched economic inequalities that drive the disparities in access to sufficient, nutritious food have been made more visual in the footage of thousands of citizens queueing for food parcels. These inequalities are well documented and existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic. They are complex, multi-faceted, and structural. They result from centuries of systemic oppression and are only



set to worsen in the wake of the pandemic. In our small way, as academics and students privileged to work and study at the University of Pretoria, we feel it is our duty to play a role not only in the dissemination of knowledge, but in a practical manner as well. To kick off Tšhemo ya Setšhaba we will be using a team of student volunteers to produce seedlings, which will then be available at cost price to anyone wanting to start their own food gardens. This will then be complimented with weekend training programmes to provide practical support and training to home and community gardeners.

'Food is the moral right of all who are born into this world'
-Norman Borlaug.

COVID-19 pandemic in the rear-view mirror in a continuing journey

Jady Hewitt (General Manager: Phyllis Robertson Home)



Phyllis Robertson Home was severely affected by the nationwide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, our lockdown was probably different to everyone else's, just like our normal is done a little differently. Our normal includes disabled adults with disabilities ranging through physical, intellectual, psychiatric and every possible nuance in between, many of them functioning with multiple disabilities. We live life in full colour in spite of the challenges that define our normal.

This home is the main residence for our residents and they only occasionally visit families/friends away from the home. Because our residents are unable to function independently and require varying levels of care, support, and supervision, we continue to operate fully during the entire time of the lockdown, regardless of the level. You will notice that we refer to 'residents' as opposed to 'patients' as these people are not broken waiting to be repaired or in a process of restoring what society considers to be health.

Due to COVID-19 and the susceptibilities of our residents, we remain on the most extreme level of lockdown and only essential supplies are allowed. None of the residents are allowed out and no visitors are allowed in. Because we did not fully

grasp the nature of the pandemic, we initially prepared residents, families and staff for the 21-day lockdown. When this was extended, the credibility of the management team was compromised, both with intellectually challenged residents and with the aging family members who 'knew' that they could not possibly carry the virus and do not understand our fervour to protect the residents living in close quarters and using communal spaces. Our residents rebelled when they realised that their weekly grocery shopping trips were not going to happen; very few of them possess the skills required to perform online shopping. The surprising complete ban on the sale of tobacco products resulted in severe behavioural episodes in intellectually and emotionally compromised psychiatric residents, and the already overloaded staff had to increase their vigilance to contain excessive arguments, physical altercations and threats of suicide. Maintaining stability is a priority and we may have employed unorthodox methods.

Some of the staff were scared to come to work initially, but all turned up and continued to perform their respective tasks and adapted to the new excessive hygiene procedures to which both employees and, to a lesser extent, the residents are

subjected. Our daily art activities and weekly dance class with volunteers coming from outside have also been suspended. Due to the inability of the sheltered workshop on our premises to facilitate social distancing, our residents still have not returned to work and have forfeited their stipends. Our regular Sunday spiritual nourishing sessions were suspended as we became reliant on unreliable Internet services and technology for live streaming of services. Most of our challenges then were of a social nature and we continue to educate and inform on the necessity for this.

Another outcome of this pandemic was a worsening of our financial position. None of our normal fundraising functions can take place and two of our residents' families lost their incomes due to lay-offs. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitisers were initially scarce and still come at highly inflated prices, which were not provided for in our budget that was finalised in February 2020.

Operational challenges included staff arriving late because of transportation issues and accommodating staff who could not find public transport to coincide with their hours of work. Municipal refuse removal and bio-waste services were not functional for the first month and

continue to be erratic. With more people working from home, the Internet became painfully slow and frustrating to use.

Most of our residents are state patients and had long-awaited specialist clinic appointments indefinitely postponed. Visiting

clinics were limited to extraordinary emergency cases only, and obtaining prescriptions for chronic medication would have been an unbearable challenge were it not for the cooperation of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Pretoria and the regular attendance of Dr Onida Venter, Dr Jan Heese, Dr

Joanelle Stonehouse and Dr Jo-Marie Siemens. We look forward to future cooperation and interventions by other faculties and department who have assisted in the past and additional ones which could assist with mitigating the effect of this pandemic on our residents who form part of a very vulnerable society.



Community engagement in COVID-19 times: Challenges and opportunities



*Dr Nkhensani Susan Thuketana
(Lecturer: Department of Early
Childhood Education)*

Community engagement, by design, mutually benefits targeted individuals, schools, communities and the institutions conducting such engagements, depending on the outcomes set for the project. The University of Pretoria conducts community engagement projects structured into the curriculum with the aim of producing professionals with graduate attributes who will strive to find solutions for societal challenges. In the Methodology of Learning Support (JMD 351 module) in particular, student teachers engage with communities by visiting nearby schools to practise the assessment of perceptual skills development in learners

Life unusual at Reliable House

Emanuel Maringa (Manager: Reliable House)



Reliable House is a haven of hope for the homeless men in and around Hatfield. It has been an answer to homeless men who are willing to be assisted in transitioning back into the community through provision of transitional housing, harm reduction approaches and psychosocial approaches. Through projects like the book club, support groups, entrepreneurship and self-sustenance support and employment creation, clients are supported in their journey to independent living.

With the outbreak of COVID-19, Reliable House became an alternative home as the lockdown was declared countrywide, leaving homeless people seeking places of refuge. We started our preparations by consulting with our clients who were willing to relocate home and followed this with training everybody with regard to what is expected of them at Reliable House. We displayed a flip chart on our notice board to help with information and guidelines about COVID-19 so that people always had the resource to refer to if need be.

We implemented a lockdown register that recorded for clients' use of the sanitiser system at our main entrance. The clients had difficulty with the movement register as it made restrictions on their time and required them to say where were going and give a reason for leaving the centre. Their lives of accessing drugs and alcohol, including recycling, begging, car guarding and car washing to generate income, were over. Some men left the centre voluntarily because they could not adjust to changes that make life unusual at Reliable House during COVID-19.

A sad incident during level 4 of the lockdown was the death of Mr Cornelius Hlongwane from Mamelodi. He

and share with in-service teachers the impact that such underdevelopment has in respect of learning difficulties. Play-based pedagogy incorporating games is used during the assessments. Learners generally enjoy the programme, and many positives as well as challenges are unravelled during the assessments.

The positives include teachers acquiring the necessary assessment skill and an understanding of the learning difficulties associated with underdeveloped perceptual skills. This has cascaded to, among other things, one school establishing a relationship with the District-Based Support Team, whose responsibility is to outsource professional support for the challenges faced by both learners and teachers at the school. Furthermore, the association initiated parental involvement, which is understood to enhance the academic and social development of learners.

While numerous benefits have been reported on the project over the past five years, the programme could not be completed in 2020 due to the emergence of COVID-19. Since the coronavirus is known to spread through close physical contact, South Africa went into lockdown. As a result, schools and universities closed as part of a strategy to curb the spread of the virus. This initially seemed like a lost opportunity for the identified school to benefit from the project. However, the lockdown exposed issues that may strengthen community engagement projects moving forward. Firstly, it exposed the social divide between the haves and have-nots, which is perpetuating inequalities in the country. Secondly, the use of technology that can be accessed anywhere and at any time, and that can enhance the quality of the learning environment, is not a luxury anymore. Finally, yet importantly, if South Africa envisages itself as part of the global world, universities should dedicate resources to incorporate training in the use of technology in its community engagements. This is essential to avert total closure of schools, particularly for children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, and to end the vicious circle of poverty in the country.



died of natural causes, not COVID-19. He was laid to rest within three days after he passed. May his soul rest in peace.

Our centre came under the spotlight when MEC of Education in Gauteng Mr Panyaza Lesufi instructed Mr Sasha Lalla to relocate three old homeless men living at Caledonian Stadium to Reliable House. Caledonian Stadium was a place where homeless men and drug addicts were accommodated after the COVID-19 lockdown announcement by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Tshwane municipality departments and institutions like the food bank and the Department of Health and Social Development started sending food, blankets and mattresses, and Kitso Lesedi Youth Development provided food.

The government intervention came at the right time because the Unit of Community Engagement at the University of Pretoria and five churches around Hatfield were providing help, but it was limited. Thanks to everyone who donated food, especially Tuks students whose outreach programmes have touched those who are vulnerable during COVID-19 at Reliable House. We have managed to organise a quarantine room to be used if a case of coronavirus occurs; we have been lucky so far, and no coronavirus cases have occurred at Reliable House.



A story of hope and perseverance

Lucky Gira (IkamvaYouth volunteer, third-year BEd student)

My name is Lucky Gira. I am a 22-year-old man who grew up in Mamelodi East with my family of four in a one-room shack. The passing of my mother on 5 November 2008 saw my entire world fall apart. I was in Grade 4 then and I did not understand what death meant. I always thought she would come back someday. However, reality dawned on me when I saw other kids with their mothers, and then I knew I would never see my mother again.

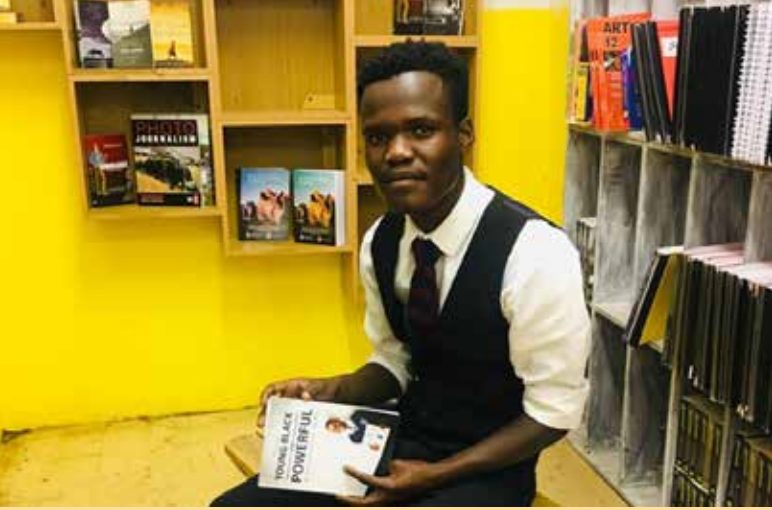
I began to distance myself from my schoolmates; I felt like no one would understand my pain. My isolation led to depression, and that affected my Grade 7 year-end results. In Grade 9, I succumbed to peer pressure and fell into

the wrong crowd who smoked cigarettes. Cigarettes quickly led to weed. To my surprise, with this new crowd and behaviour, I became very 'cool' at school. I was loved by everyone. In December that year, we received our final report and I was the only one among my group of friends who failed. My immediate thought was to drop out of school. My grandmother told me, *'until you forgive yourself, find closure with your mom's passing, you will always be overpowered by your pain. Always know that God will never forsake or leave you'*. Those words gave me renewed fight and I was determined to change my life.

I joined IkamvaYouth in 2014 when I was repeating Grade 9, attending school at J Kekana Secondary School, and I matriculated in 2017. IkamvaYouth is a non-

profit organisation that enables under-resourced youths to pull themselves and each other out of poverty. The organisation works to help learners in Grades 9 to 12 to significantly improve their matric results and enable them to qualify for tertiary education. After I joined IkamvaYouth my marks started to improve drastically. If I could compare IkamvaYouth to a person, the support that IkamvaYouth gives its learners would be that of a mother figure, because the programme has helped me nurture my intellectual skills and steered me to a career in education that matched my strengths. I am now a proud third-year student at UNISA studying towards a bachelor's degree in education (BEd).

After matriculating, in 2018, I returned to IkamvaYouth to



A volunteer tutor from the IkamvaYouth Mamelodi branch in Pretoria shares his story

volunteer as a tutor. I currently tutor Mathematics Literacy and History for Grades 10 and 11. I am part of the team that designs the IkamvaYouth Mamelodi branch Mathematics and English fundamental classes. I am also very passionate about reading and literacy; as a result, I am actively involved in the book club, spelling bee, and debates at the branch.

The IkamvaYouth programme is learner-driven and is centred around learners' questions. Learners are equipped with tools to identify their doubts, pose questions, and guide their studies in a focused way. The tutors, youths who have graduated, support learners to reach a point where they can teach themselves. The goal of this approach is to equip learners with knowledge, skills, networks, and resources to access tertiary education and employment opportunities when they graduate.

I learned that, at times, it is not that learners are not performing well at school, but rather that they lack an environment that is conducive to learning and encourages peer-to-peer support. Engaging with learners from different schools helped me get a better understanding of the subjects I was struggling with as we shared different methods of learning at the branch.

Furthermore, the tutors at the branch did not judge us by our report cards, but rather treated all of us as equals, which made learning comfortable and enjoyable. Among the many opportunities offered at IkamvaYouth, I learned basic computer skills, which helped me when I went to university. As a passionate motivational speaker, I was also offered the platform of being a master of ceremonies (MC) at numerous events and even facilitated sessions at different branches across Gauteng.

I will forever be grateful to IkamvaYouth; indeed, 'Ikamva Lisezandleni Zethu' (the future is in our hands)! Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. I would also like to commend and salute the University of Pretoria for supporting IkamvaYouth Mamelodi by providing us with tutors for Saturday sessions and also for the annual winter school programme.

COVID-19 lockdown and non-profit organizations

Kathryn Malherbe (Director/ Founder BCSP and Lecturer: Department Radiography, UP)

Breast Cancer Support Pretoria (BCSP) is a local support group for breast cancer survivors, family members, and women recently diagnosed with cancer across South Africa. Our annual events have had a significant negative impact during the COVID-19 pandemic. Breast cancer treatment, especially chemotherapy, has a significant impact on immunity and overall susceptibility to external infections. COVID-19 has made this risk even higher for such individuals.

Annual grant funding for all non-profit organisations (NPOs) has also been halted, causing any further activities related to our annual event planning to be put on hold until the financial crises our country is currently facing can be resolved. There are currently over 220 000 NPOs registered with the Department of Social Development, many of which depend on funding and donations to support their operations.



Collage of five years of images taken at our local events in South Africa featuring the Directors of the NPO: Roxy Zowitzky (former Mrs SA top 5) and Mrs Kathryn Malherbe

BCSP's in-person events of up to 40 women have had a three-month closure. Since the majority of our members are based in rural settings, the possibility of online lectures/events are limited to those women in areas with appropriate infrastructure and network capabilities. BCSP is currently promoting joint ventures with the University of Pretoria and the Department of Radiography (Faculty of Health Sciences) to allow students the opportunity for community engagement. However, due to the lockdown periods and online teaching methods, the students were not able to attend these sessions.

BCSP will be hosting a joint venture with Tateni Home Care Nursing Services in Mamelodi during July 2020, where cancer care packages will be delivered, but with restricted items and strict infection control measures to ensure the safety of all recipients of the packs. In future, the need for contingency plans during a global pandemic should be provided to all NPOs so that a collaborative support structure is developed and assisted by government to uphold the needs of vulnerable members of NPOs.

Unprecedented challenges lie ahead, and it is important to focus on 'on-the-ground needs', keeping new interventions aligned with the NPO's current scope and vision.

The best way to predict the future is to create it

Ms Salomé Pretorius, Dr Taryn Bond-Barnard and Prof Alex Antonites



Embracing change, being flexible and the ability to adapt are phrases often used and topics often discussed by lecturers in class to prepare students for the dynamic and ever-changing world of work. With the outbreak of COVID-19 and the unexpected closure of all campuses, a situation evolved where our teaching as theory became a reality. The successful completion of the academic year suddenly depended on our ability to create a new learning environment that considers the 'new normal', utilising technology as the key facilitator of teaching and learning. But a key component of our learning process involves experience-based practical exposure, which in principle cannot merely be delivered via the provided technological platforms.

The first-year BCom students at the Mamelodi Campus of the University of Pretoria plan and implement a variety of novel community-based projects each year as part of their Business Management (OBS 133) module. Since 2018, the collaboration between the Department of Business

Management and the Graduate School of Technology Management (GSTM) has facilitated a process where student projects address various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in and around the Mamelodi community in Tshwane. The purpose of these projects is to develop various soft skills which will be translated to the future world of work.

This year the students will be addressing SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by cultivating a variety of vegetables in the University's vegetable garden and distributing them to early childhood development centres in the Mamelodi community. Several other groups will be addressing SDG 4 (Quality Education) by handing over educational resources such as story books, board games

and toys that they have designed themselves, aligned with the early childhood development centres. Finally, some groups will be setting up street stores (<https://www.thestreetstore.org/>), collecting and distributing non-perishable food and second-hand clothing for students in need and homeless community members. These are essentially pop-up stores, where those in need can shop for second-hand clothes and goods that they need or want, in a dignified way. This concept addresses SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The uncertainty created by the COVID-19 lockdown required rapid, innovative adaptation for the successful execution of the mentioned plans. In collaboration with the Project Management Institute (PMI), a new plan was formulated that involves a five-week, online Project Management Skills for Life training course for which

our students will receive a certificate upon successful completion. Moreover, every group will benefit from a five-month mentorship programme where professional project managers from around the world will mentor our students virtually to plan and execute their projects successfully within the 'new normal' environment.

The skills which the students obtain through the Project Management Skills for Life programme are of great value. It teaches them how to plan, manage and execute everyday projects, such as assignments or semester projects. One of the key skills developed here pertains to the enablement of group dynamics, a core component of the world of work, coupled with strategic communication with the project stakeholders in a professional manner.

Setting an example of how to apply resilience and agility might be the most valuable learning attributes linked to this unique learning experience. Waiting for a return to the 'old normal' is not a strategy to achieve success. However, taking responsibility to achieve the objective set regardless of the circumstances distinguishes a successful individual from an average performer.

'The best way to predict the future is to create it' Abraham Lincoln. These words might be truer today than ever before.





From left: Nthabiseng Masethla and Musa Mngadi

Drama for edutainment

Prof Marié-Heleen Coetzee

An adaptation of *The Snow Queen*, under the direction of Prof Marié-Heleen Coetzee, took young audiences on an action-packed adventure in March 2020. It is a story about the bonds of friendship, stranger danger and a young girl's grit. Two friends, Tselane and Kai, get caught up in the age-old struggle between good and evil. When Kai is lured away from home by a magical presence, Tselane embarks on dangerous journey to find him. Of course, there are many tricky obstacles that cross her path, but she also makes new friends and melts many icy hearts in her struggle to find Kai.

The young (and the young at heart) heartily sang, laughed, and yelled along with Tselane and her friends. Theatre for young audiences stimulates the imagination, assists in language enrichment, and gives insight into choices and behaviours. It is a potent combination of education and entertainment - edutainment!

University of Pretoria (UP) Partnerships in Progress, steered by Gernia van Niekerk, made it possible for audiences from Eersterus and Mamelodi to attend the shows. Teachers and learners spent much time talking to the characters and taking photographs with the characters. Post-performance, many characters also



From left: Kirsten Dickenson and Nthabiseng Masethla

received very stern messages about their behaviour and decisions from learners!

Costumes were designed by Nomzamo Maseko from the Drama Wardrobe, and the wardrobe team received support from seamstresses from Mamelodi, as part of UP Partners in Progress' skills development and employment projects. Stephina Hlatswayo, one of the seamstresses who assisted with costume-making for the production, commented that:

'The experience was great. We got to work on a different kind of garment [costumes] from what we usually work with [uniforms and fashion garments]. We also got to learn a bit about doing some finishing decorations such as beading and making tassles. You ladies [Nomzamo, Aphiwe and Cindy] were very friendly, communicable and efficient in responding to our queries and questions. Team effort was also incredible. We enjoyed working with you...!'

Set and lighting design was created by award-winning designer Wilhelm Disbergen using Green Hippo, and the soundscape was by third-year BDRAM student, C. J. Swart. The School of Arts: Drama Department presents an annual theatre production for young audiences. We look forward to working with Ms Hlatswayo and her team again.

Drama offers CE modules from second-year level to honours level under the umbrella of Applied Drama/Theatre. The modules have an interdisciplinary focus. The projects tied to these modules see students finding partners inside and outside the University to create participatory, dialogical creative work that engages with issues raised by our partners. Our third-year Applied Drama students were to engage with drama and theatre-based strategies as cross-curricular instructional tools in Viva School, Mamelodi, before lockdown halted the project. They cannot wait to start the project with teachers and learners later this year!



Dr Mohale's office is the streets of Tshwane

Leigh Wils



Dr Matilda Mohale does street medicine. She carries her supplies in a backpack. Her office is the streets of Tshwane. Her patients are the people who live on the streets. Passion and purpose fuel her. Mohale was first exposed to the health issues facing homeless people while specialising in family medicine at the University of Pretoria. She now works in the Community Orientated Substance Use Programme (COSUP). COSUP is an initiative of the Department of Family Medicine, the City of Tshwane, and the provincial departments of Health and Social Development. It is the first publicly funded, city-wide response to substance use in the country. COSUP assists people who use drugs wherever they live, including those on the streets. Working from 17 sites across the Tshwane Metro, it provides screenings, assessments, brief interventions and referrals for HIV, TB, hepatitis C and drugs. This is particularly important because people who use substances are at high risk of contracting infectious diseases.

COSUP also offers counselling, safer use practices, opioid substitution therapy (OST), and needle and syringe exchange services. These interventions are all part of a harm-reduction approach to substance use

that ultimately aims to reduce the individual and public health risks of substance use.

OST is a globally recognised medical intervention used to treat heroin addiction. Users often switch from smoking to injecting because they need increasing amounts of the drug to get the same effect. OST helps to break the cycle of users having to endure the nausea, sweats, pain and anxiety that come from withdrawal from heroin.

The needle and syringe exchange service (offering clean needles to people who inject drugs, in exchange for used ones) is critical to reducing the harm of injecting drugs. Especially in South Africa, where over seven million people live with

HIV, it is important to do everything possible to prevent an increase.

Like everyone else, people who use substances need help to understand how to manage their health better, and they need accepting and non-judgmental healthcare services they can trust. This is where healthcare and social work professionals, community health workers and peers come in—counselling, teaching, providing and linking them to services. Dr Mohale is a familiar face on several routes in the city centre. She fearlessly walks the inner city around Bosmont, Salvokop, Baghdad and Marabastad. She has befriended many whom she says accompany her on her routes and ensure her safety. *'The streets are filled with hope. I have learnt so much about myself through the people here, and about how I show up in life. I get to know people by name, and it is quite an experience to connect in the way we do.'* Through the University of Pretoria's community engagement programme, thousands of students actively contribute to and learn from COSUP and other initiatives. Third-sector organisations, like Tshwane Leadership Foundation and Sediba Hope Medical Centre, are key partners, providing shelter and care to many of the most vulnerable people in the city.

The long-term goal of COSUP is to have substance use services fully integrated into generalist primary health care.





BAdmin@Tuks Society: Matric motivation

Thato Tshabangu and Gontse Nchabeleng

Every year the BAdmin@tuks society, in collaboration with JuniorTukkie (JT), embarks on a journey to Tshwane Secondary School to motivate matric learners towards academic excellence and inform them about the courses offered here at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of this project is to give back to the community, help learners understand how the application process of the University works, and boost their confidence as matriculants.

This year the project was headed by Gontse Nchabeleng and Thato Tshabangu. It was a very successful and informative event, thanks in large part to our guest speaker, Dr Tyanai Masiya, who is a lecturer at the School of Public Management and Administration (SPMA). He was kind enough to accompany us to the school and share a presentation about what the SPMA offers, the relevance of the field of study to the public, and the careers to follow after completing the courses in the

school. Our chairperson, Constantia Mahlangu was brave enough to speak about the hardships she went through in high school and university, thereby showing learners that success is possible despite the trials of life. It was a very emotional and inspiring moment.

Vuyiswa Zondi from Juniortukkie, together with her team, spoke about the processes of joining their society as well as the benefits that comes with being a part of it. JuniorTukkie is a society established to assist learners from Grade 9 to 12 to make responsible career choices and to ensure academic excellence by offering programmes whereby students who struggle academically are assisted.

During our contact with the Deputy Principal, Mrs Eva Aphane, she mentioned how beneficial this project is to students and how this should take place at other schools as well. We hope the new Executive Committee of BAdmin@tuks and JT continue with this project and keep on helping young learners.



Visit to Mohau Child and Youth Care Centre and the impact of COVID-19 on community engagement initiatives

Sunday O. Ochai, Nothando Shongwe and Marcus Makgabo (Members of the Postgraduate Student Association)

The Mohau Child and Youth Care Centre situated in Kalafong Hospital in Pretoria West provides refuge, care and support to orphaned, abused, abandoned, neglected and terminally ill children and families who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The centre relies on donations for those financial needs unaccounted for by government funding.

Recognising this gap, the Postgraduate Student Association (PGSA) adopted the Mohau Child and Youth Care Centre for an annual contribution of resources highlighted



by the centre. In 2019, the current PGSA committee engaged with the centre to continue the giving spirit of enriching the lives of children. Postgraduate students visited the centre on several occasions for play dates with the children.

The project was centred on collecting donations from students and staff of the Faculty of Veterinary Science. Donations were collected from departments, centres and Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital (OVAH). These included food, toiletries, clothes, cleaning supplies and toys. The contributions were supplemented by monetary donations from postgraduate

students in the faculty through the year-end fundraiser gala dinner event.

Unfortunately, this initiative was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the declaration of the pandemic as a global health emergency and the subsequent declaration of it as a national disaster in South Africa, many measures have been put in place to mitigate and curb the spread of this disease, most notable of which is the national lockdown.

These measures have so far proven to be effective but are not without impact on other facets of life. The social life and activities of the citizens

have been drastically impacted, as people now have very little physical access to the community and other spaces. This restriction has negatively impacted on community engagement (CE) activities and initiatives as there is no CE without true engagement

(interactions) with the community. Most engagements are on-site and require the participation of students, other cooperate organisations and the community itself. Some communities depend largely on CE initiatives to cater to some aspects of their lives. Therefore, a halt or restriction on CE activities would have a ripple effect on their lives and, to some extent, livelihoods. Another important aspect of CE that is negatively impacted is the skills and experience it offers to the students. For some students, this represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and as such, they would miss the chance to acquire these skills.



CE is crucial in its participatory and collaborative methodology to the design and implementation of the specific needs and expectations of the community. With the current restrictions and lockdown, this collaboration cannot be achieved, which in turn affects community-specific plans and initiatives. For instance, the restrictions and lockdown have affected the giving efforts of the PGSA in South Africa. The pandemic has limited the flexibility to meet stakeholders for donations for planned fundraiser events. Communication has been restricted to emails and phone calls, which cannot always be relied upon, especially with prospective stakeholders. Donations were collected by placing boxes in various departments in the faculty. This, however, cannot be implemented and achieved due to the closure of the institution. There is then an urgent need to strategise and redesign CE initiatives in the light of the present reality.

Making a difference on Outreach: Rust de Winter Vaccination Campaign

Mr Brandan Murray, Dr Chris Marufu, Prof Nenene Qekwana and Dr Tandile Ndobeni

At 05:30 on a chilly winter Friday morning, 120 Veterinary Student Community Outreach (VETSCO) students and Dr Chris Marufu (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, DVTD), Dr Tandile Ndobeni (Veterinary Public

Health, VPH) and Prof Nenene Qekwana (VPH) set out from Onderstepoort (OP) Campus to Rust de Winter. The purpose of the journey was to attend the annual Rust de Winter Vaccination Campaign, which is a partnership between the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD), the Faculty of Veterinary Science (Community Engagement Group and VETSCO)

and the Farmers' Association from the Rust de Winter area. Two busloads of students and the three vets travelled from OP and arrived incident-free just before 07:00 at the Rust de Winter Home Affairs Office, which was the central meeting place. We received a huge compliment as it was the first time in the few years that the outreach has been held that the students arrived earlier than the GDARD officials and farmers!

The students, who were composed of undergraduates in different years of study and a few postgraduate MSc and PhD students, were divided into about 18 teams of 5 to 7 students each. Each team of students travelled with a Veterinarian and an Animal Health technician (AHT) who were to train and supervise them during the vaccination campaign. It was good to catch up with a number of community service veterinarians who had recently graduated from OP and were part of the vaccination teams. Each group had between 150 and 200 cattle to vaccinate belonging to four to five farmers. Some of the groups even had a few sheep and goats to vaccinate. Cattle were vaccinated with SupaVax, for the prevention of black quarter, botulism and anthrax. Additionally, cattle were vaccinated with LumpyVax, for the prevention of lumpy skin disease. Sheep and goats were vaccinated with MultiVax-P, which is a multi-clostridial and pasteurellosis vaccine.

After pairing the vaccination teams and farmers, all teams dispersed



to the various farms in different vehicles, some travelled on the back of pick-up trucks, while others squeezed into vans and vehicles belonging to GDARD officials and farmers. Each team started at the first farm, where they had farmers waiting or had to assist to pack the animals into the crush pens for vaccination. After vaccinating at the first farm, the teams proceeded to the rest of farms on their route and quite close in proximity to each other. Students' knowledge of ethology, restraint and animal handling, record keeping and vaccination was tested to the limit. Practical instruction was given on how to handle vaccines, maintaining cold chain, routes of administration and dosage. The capable AHTs and veterinarians who accompanied the students provided practical assistance. Most of the groups managed to vaccinate the cattle with no accidents, while some had minor injuries which antiseptic and Elastoplast easily sorted. An opportunity was given to our future veterinarians to chat to the farmers about the importance of vaccination and primary animal health care. It was good to see the farmers' appreciation of the students' efforts, and their hospitality was evident from their offer of snacks to the vaccination teams. Our final tally of administered vaccines was 3 519 SupaVax, 3 519 LumpyVax, 371 MultiVax-P (309 goats and 62 sheep).

Each team returned to the central meeting point where hot dogs, cool drink, tea/coffee and savoury muffins were waiting for them. The vaccination teams were so happy to see that food was being served, because before breaking

away to vaccinate cattle, they were informed that there would be no food provided on the day. The teams filled their bellies and waited for one of the groups, which had taken longer than the others, to return from their farm. Once all teams were back, students, GDARD officials and farmers bade each other farewell before the students embarked on the trip back to OP. Dusty and sweaty, but with a sense of fulfilment, the OP contingent arrived on campus around 15:00, itching for a shower and rest. All agreed it was an amazing day and another successful outreach that made a difference to the farmers. The Rust de Winter Vaccination Campaign has won national and international awards (World Veterinary Association: World Veterinary Day Award, Gauteng Premier Award, and the Centre for Public Service Innovation Award). It has also made a difference in the lives of the farmers, who have testified to the improved health and productivity of their livestock, which has helped to increase their income and improved their livelihoods.

A big thank you to Dr Tandile Ndobeni (OP) and Mr Ali Makgatho (GDARD) who organised the event, from the buses to the vaccines and the food. Our gratitude also goes to the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for affording students the opportunity to be involved in the vaccination campaign and to make a difference. We look forward to more opportunities to get involved and make a difference to communities around us.

Educating communities on albinism through art

Dr Raita Steyn (Art Education lecturer)

In the framework of the Department of Humanities Education's commitment to promote the policy of inclusion and elimination of all expressions of social discrimination through education, the play *Mama, I want the black that you are* was presented as part of the Dean's Concert Week at Groenkloof Campus. Produced by Mpho Molepo and directed by Arthur Molepo, the play was warmly applauded and duly appreciated. Staging a constructive awareness of albinism, it has indeed reached its goal for a positive comprehension of its semantics through the horror of its destructive prejudices and the absurdity of its stereotypes.

After the successful performance of the play, Dr Raita Steyn took this project a step further, both artistically and academically. Under



From left: Ms Boitumelo Mothabela and Ms Regina Ndlovu

the same direction and cast, the play will be presented together with a short workshop on themes relevant to theatre, directing and entrepreneurial possibilities in

Greece towards the end of 2020.

In collaboration with the Nkgo Ya Metsi and Molepo theatre projects, the Faculty of Fine Arts of the



From left: Mr Alistair Dube, Dr Raita Steyn, Ms Zama Khumalo, Mr Arthur Molepo (Director) and Mr Mpho Molepo (Producer)

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUT) and our Groenkloof Art Education students will work together on the same project under the supervision of Dr Steyn. The students from Groenkloof will create

artworks under the theme 'People with albinism', which will be exhibited in Greece, while the props and costumes for the play will be created by students of the AUT.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted all international travel, hence deferring the travel plans to Greece until the reopening of all borders. Meanwhile, the contact between UP and the AUT Art students has been maintained through teleconferencing. On a positive note, this platform has dynamically supported the albinism project by keeping it productively alive, though on a smaller scale. Currently, still in the framework of the scholar exchange programme, a shared art project is being materialised through the students' creations.

Matimba health awareness

Jessica Joubert (Fourth-year Occupational Therapy student)



On 3 March 2020, ten fourth-year Occupational Therapy (OT) students presented a health awareness workshop at Matimba Centre for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children. This workshop was aimed at preventing the spread of common diseases such as colds and flu by teaching the children the importance of washing their hands.

The workshop started by splitting the group of children into two and provided one group with environmentally friendly glitter on their hands. It was explained to the children that the glitter symbolised germs. The children were then encouraged to run around and play a game of touchers and give each other high fives. After this, they noticed how the glitter had spread to the entire group. This was to symbolise how quickly and easily germs spread.

The children were then taught how to wash their hands properly. First, it was demonstrated to them that just washing their hands with water is not enough to remove the 'glitter germs' and thus they always have to use soap. Secondly, it was demonstrated that you need to wash your hands-on top, below, and in between your fingers. All the children were then given the opportunity to wash their hands using the demonstrated method.

The workshop was concluded by teaching the children a hand-washing song. They were able to sing along and dance to the song. This brought an element of fun and enjoyment to the workshop. As fourth-year OT students, we really enjoyed being able to interact with these children. We would like to thank Matimba for allowing us to present this workshop to their children and look forward to further collaboration in the future.





Lockdown and the Hatfield CID

Lucas Luckhoff (CEO Hatfield CID)

When President Cyril Ramaphosa made the announcement of a nationwide lockdown, very few of us were really ready for what was about to happen. Driving to work on the morning of Thursday, 26 March 2020, it felt like an early Sunday morning drive through our beloved Hatfield. Not a person, not another car on the roads, no car guards and not a single student could be seen around the University of Pretoria's Hatfield Campus.

Arriving at the office, the reality sunk in when we were told by the Tshwane Municipality that City Improvement Districts (CIDs) are deemed essential services and the necessary authorisations had to be requested from the Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission (CIPC). Scrambling for legitimacy was quite a concerning matter as urgent arrangements had to be made to ensure that personnel obtained the necessary travel permits. Measures also had to be put in place to ensure the safety of our workforce. One of

the most valuable things I was taught as a junior manager in the corporate world was 'never to waste a good crisis'. With that in mind, a full staff meeting was convened and the game plan for lockdown was discussed in detail. The essence of the plan was the following:

Ensure the safety and health of all employees: The cleaning team members were divided into two smaller teams that would work on alternate days. With hardly any people in the public spaces of Hatfield, that was completely feasible and worked well, while at the same time reducing the risk of exposure to 50% of the cleaning team daily. Simultaneously, protective gear was procured, and new procedures were introduced to manage the risk of contracting the coronavirus. Our contracted security company, Peaceforce, took responsibility for the protection of its members.

Maintain standards: The protection and maintenance of the public spaces remains the core of the CID's mandate and, therefore, security

personnel and cleaning staff were deployed in a manner that ensured that Hatfield remained perfectly functional. Criminality came to a grinding halt, with only the few very foolish criminals chancing their luck. Needless to say, all perpetrators were arrested after being spotted on the CCTV cameras. The cleaning staff removed the rubble from our public spaces and maintained the flower boxes.

Trim the operating budget: Very soon after lockdown, management undertook an exercise to determine what costs could possibly be reduced in anticipation of cashflow pressures that may arise due to the impact of the lockdown and the ability of businesses and landlords to maintain levy payments on which the sustained functioning of the CID depends. Collaboration with our contributors resulted in a potential levy reduction of 25% for the months of April and May 2020. This was approved by the board of directors.

Get to grips with virtual meetings: The new reality limited the movement



of people, and virtual meetings on Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meets became the order of the day. Weekly check-in meetings with the Chairman and Directors become standing operating procedure and proved to be effective.

Use of personal protection equipment (PPE): All staff members quickly realised the necessity of sanitising. Outrageous prices charged for these products, which

were essential in order to comply with regulations, placed a drain on our limited resources. Masks, screens and sanitising have become the new normal and will probably remain with us for some time.

The CID remains committed to serving Hatfield and its people to the best of its ability in terms of its mandate. As our former president, Madiba, once remarked: *'I learned that courage was not the absence of fear,*

but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear' (from Long walk to freedom, the autobiography of Nelson Mandela).

COVID-19 has brought fear into life across the planet, and only brave people will continue to do what is necessary to remain relevant and functional. The Hatfield CID commits to taking up that challenge on behalf of all the people of our suburb.



Engineers Without Borders University of Pretoria (EWB-UP)

Peter Mahapa (Projects Coordinator and Partnership Manager for EWB-UP and Bachelor of Engineering student)

Engineers Without Borders South Africa (EWB-SA) is a non-profit organisation that was founded in the year 2013 and currently has ten chapters across South Africa. EWB-UP, the University of Pretoria chapter, was founded the same year as the main branch, with 320 student members. Engineers Without Borders exists to provide various communities with skills and engineering expertise with the aim of improving their quality of life. The organisation

identifies challenges faced by the communities and provides solutions that are sustainable, such that the community may continue to apply and implement them in the absence of the organisation.

The Community Based Project (JCP) module partnered with EWB-UP the same year it was established, which also helped navigate the partnership with the main branch, EWB-SA. With the help of the JCP module, in 2016, EWB-UP established a partnership with Kutumela Molefi Primary School, which is a 'drop to' centre for learners coming from the growing neighbouring township. The school was built on a farm, and with no blueprint for its layout, classrooms were randomly erected on the farm. The school was worn out, had no access to water and thus no working ablution facilities for the learners.

Through the organisation, the JCP students made renovations to the school and added jungle gyms for the lower Grades. Through partnership with a civil engineering company, Bigen Africa, the school's layout was formalised. This included a design plan for the piping

system to help distribute water within the school. In 2019 EWB-UP partnered with Leeuwfontein Primary Farm School through JCP. The school's principal pointed out issues within the school, and the JCP students helped build sitting areas and tables for the learners during break time, as per request. The jungle gym was renovated, and swings and seesaws were added for the learners as a form of entertainment.

As the school is farm-based, succulents were placed on the fence along with a chicken coop, serving as learning activities within the school. The completion of the JCP projects also enabled students to acclimatise to the new environment and to identify more technical projects that required engineering expertise, namely, designing and building a drainage system to transfer the waste to the sewage system. EWB-UP's vision is to become a hub for innovation of community development projects based at the University of Pretoria.

'Empowering engineers to empower communities'
EWB-SA.





Purple power-vet and vet nursing students going the extra mile

Jayna Kessa (Chairperson: VetSCO) and Tayla Marcel (Vice-Chairperson: VetSCO)

We are a group of veterinary and veterinary nursing students with the sole purpose of bridging the gap between theory and practical knowledge. We do this by conducting outreaches throughout the academic year, providing many students the opportunity to gain experience and confidence in their practical skills out in the field. We also provide an environment for vet and vet nurse students to work together. Members of Veterinary Student Community Outreach (VetSCO) strive to educate our peers while providing them with opportunities to help them become the best vets and vet nurses they can be.

Our main ambition is to give back to the community by helping ensure good health care is provided to animals in areas that are unable to afford it or do not have access to it. Our outreaches have a strong educational component to create awareness about diseases specific to the areas and animals we are helping, thereby improving animal health and welfare in township communities. Overall, we aim to achieve these objectives in a compassionate and dedicated way as a community of the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

On our outreaches, we provide free veterinary services including a general clinical exam, vaccinations, deworming, dipping as well as

free veterinary care from our supervising vet. We attempt to reduce stray animal populations via sterilisation campaigns and to improve pet or herd health, which is very important for production farmers whose livelihood depends on the animals they care for. We also provide education about zoonotic diseases and their animals' health. In 2020 we were able to conduct two outreaches, both focused on small animal populations. The first was Makapanstad on 29 February 2020, where we were able to treat 125 dogs and eight cats. This was followed by the Cosmo City outreach, where we partnered with Animal Allies on 14 March. We were able to treat over 300 dogs. VetSCO also sent a small team to assist the MAVERIC (Medical and Veterinary Rural Integrated Community) outreach project, a collaborative effort between the Faculties of Veterinary Science and Health Sciences, in Itireleng on 14 March. This was made possible through the joint efforts of the Onderstepoort Veterinary and Para-Veterinary Committee Student Committee (OPVSC) and many other societies on campus, with the aim of educating the community while gaining valuable skills.

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted our lives; it has also taken a toll on the productivity of VetSCO. On 20 March, the president announced a national lockdown, all students had to leave Onderstepoort, including the committee running VetSCO. We were unable to do any further outreaches due to public gathering restrictions. Leaving the residences and day accommodation was a matter of urgency. The suddenness and uncertainty have negatively impacted the lives of many.





Many small non-profit organisations (NPOs), farmers, pet owners and children rely on VetSCO for access to basic animal health care and educational visits. We have been unable to attend two planned ruminant outreaches and two companion animal outreaches.

This shattered us as we are well aware of the fact that most of these animals just would not receive the necessary care, especially in light of the financial difficulties many are facing during the lockdown. We have seen high numbers at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

(SPCA) of abandoned, neglected and unwanted pets. We were also made aware of recent outbreaks. Although our hands were tied, we donated leftover vaccines to an organisation, so that at least some animals would get their vaccinations, even if we are not the ones injecting them.

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<https://v3tsco.wixsite.com/vetsco>

Pathway-ing out of homelessness: Homeless people empowered through skills training

Yeukai Muruzi (Social Work student)



Project overview

This project is aimed at assisting homeless men at Bethesda Drop-in Centre in Sunnyside to enrol for skills training through the People Upliftment Programme (POPUP) in Salvakop, Pretoria.

Rationale

Contextual analysis: A community assessment was conducted to identify impediments that the community members were faced with. The students made use of community forums to ask community members about their challenges and how they would want them to be addressed. Identified impediments were homelessness, widespread unemployment and inability to meet basic needs.

Strengths identified: It was found that community members had matric and were willing to take action in addressing their challenges. We were inspired by the strength perspective theory, which emphasises focusing on the capacities and resources that people have in addressing problems they are faced with.

Hence, the project aims to help community members obtain qualifications through skills training to increase their chances of employment.

Goals and objectives of the project

Goal: To advance the skills of homeless men in areas of interest so as to increase their chances of employment

Objectives

- Consulting with clients in the community-based groups if they are interested
- Applying and registering for programmes of their choice
- Obtaining needed resources

Applicable community work practice models for guidelines

Community education: aims to improve community members' social functioning through knowledge, attitude and skills. Ignorance is eliminated through education and brings about resilient individuals and communities.

Community development: Community members are ultimately in the best position to develop themselves. From a grassroots level, we intend to mobilise community members to take ownership of their needs.

Overall guide from the social work developmental approach

This approach effectively links social welfare programmes with economic development programmes. Both social and economic development are viewed as two sides of the same coin. Social development is a dynamic process of growth and change through the promotion of developmental processes to achieve general welfare of the society.

Applicable principles

Empowerment: Power relations should shift towards people achieving greater control and influence over decisions and resources that impact on the quality of their lives through increasingly interdependent relationships.

Participation: People should be fully engaged in their own process of learning, growth and change, starting from where they are and moving at their own pace.

Self-reliance: People should be connected to each other and with their environment in ways that make them more effective in their individual and collective efforts towards a better life, developing leadership, decision-making and planning skills, among other things.



Challenges faced by Lesedi La Batho during the COVID-19 pandemic

Thapelo Mokwena (Project Coordinator)

We would like to take this opportunity to create awareness that the centre is currently operating and rendering limited services, namely: information and referral, assistance with CV creation, photocopying and CV drop-in. We are doing so with all COVID-19 safety precautions adhered to.

All training sessions were interrupted, and as a result beneficiaries did not go for their work-integrated learning, which qualifies them for certificates and offers possible employment during work-integrated learning if they prove to be competent. Interruptions to upgrades of the new computer lab mean that our new computers do not have Microsoft Office, which we desperately need to be able to continue with computer skills training. Reaching out and communicating with beneficiaries is a challenge as our beneficiaries use different platforms of communication, which is not affordable for the organisation.



Social relief

Due to lack of resources, some of the vulnerable groups, namely those vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV), commercial sex workers (CSW), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people, HIV-positive clients and teenage mothers, did not receive effective counselling and contact

support sessions. Virtual support is our current solution (calls, SMS, WhatsApp) as our groups come from diverse backgrounds.

We are having bi-weekly food parcel drives which have a huge impact on vulnerable families, who are highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, new norms of living and job losses. However, this comes with its own challenges as there are many families in need of assistance and we are unable to assist all of them due to lack of funds and the high transport costs incurred during the food parcel distribution drives, as we do door-to-door drop off visits to avoid

large gatherings at the centre. See <http://www.lesedilabatho.co.za/covid-19-response-update.html> for more information about our social relief efforts.

Proactive information programme for schools and LGBTI people

The school team could not render



their services and support to learners at schools (counselling, teen pregnancy support groups, LGBTI, TB screening and one-on-one support session) as the learners are extremely busy catching up with the work backlog incurred during levels 5 and 4 of the lockdown. Virtual support is currently our only option for these learners.

One of the most needed departments also had to shut down due to the lockdown regulations and would like to resume its services but is still very puzzled as to how to execute its services. Since it has been said that Early Childhood Development (ECD) will start operating as from 6 July, we are currently asking for donations to provide the vulnerable children with washable face masks and to buy a washing machine, which will assist ECD in maintaining high hygiene standards by regularly washing the face masks and blankets.

How the University of Pretoria can continue to partner with Lesedi La Batho

Lesedi La Batho (LLB) would appreciate extra help in rendering counselling sessions to vulnerable families for persons vulnerable to GBV, LGBTI persons, and other groups that are in desperate need of support during the lockdown. We would also appreciate help from a life coach to host a workshop with our staff members, and help raising transport funds for the school team

to do home visits for learners in need for one-on-one sessions and counselling. We would like to raise awareness of the need for donations of sanitary pads as we have a great number of learners in need of them, and for our centre-based LGBTI support group hosted once a week at the centre. As group gathering are not allowed, we are currently hosting them virtually. People can come to the centre to get more information about the group and join.

Information and communication technology improvement

We require assistance in identifying affordable virtual methods to facilitate communication between the organisation and its beneficiaries. LLB would be honoured to have the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) students come and fix our computers before the commencement of the computer skills training.

Mentorship

It would be highly appreciated if the University could share information with LLB staff and beneficiaries about COVID-19. This will insure the safety and well-being of our beneficiaries and day-care children, in order to insure that they do not contract COVID-19 and learn all the necessary measures to avoid contracting or spreading the disease and how to react when they show symptoms.

Matters of Interest

The next Community Engagement Forum will be held on Wednesday, 18 November 2020.

Casual Day will be celebrated on Friday, 4 September 2020.

Visit the University of Pretoria's online Community Engagement Management System (CEMS) for updates on community project opportunities.

The Unit for Community Engagement invites you to report on community engagement activities by submitting articles for publication in the next newsletter (Spring 2020).

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