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Table of contents

Winning the institutional community engagement award: 2022	1
Partners without borders: COVID-19 as a disrupter and facilitator	3
Art, empathy and inclusion: My experience in Thessaloniki	5
Change makers	6
Promoting children's rights to environmental and climate justice	7
Mentorship: The power of human interaction	9
The interconnectedness of Moja Gabedi and Reliable House: An occupational therapy perspective	10
Young children who talk well, will perform well academically in the future: 33 years of services at the Clinic for High-Risk Babies	12
A visit to Freedom Park	14
IPECP in sub-Saharan Africa: A Dirisana+ Project workshop	14
KhuTow! UP residence RAG partners team up to make a 'pawsitive' impact at Wollies Animal Shelter	16
Animal rights: Human values – social action	17
And now we see: Learning from visually impaired children	18
Catch them in the crèche: A collaboration to improve education	19
Development of university-community engagement partnerships	21
Matters of interest	22



Winning the institutional community engagement award 2022

Dr Gerna Wessels (Practice Coordinator:
Department of Social Work and Criminology)

Social work, being a professional degree, rests on the twin pillars of theoretical knowledge and the ability to integrate learnt theory into practice. Community engagement is therefore not 'incorporated into' or 'added to' the social work in practice module (MWP 400) but is in fact the module.

This final-year module can be seen as the culmination of theoretical and practical knowledge gained during the three preceding years of study and aims to prepare final-year students for their entry into the social work profession as ethical and competent social workers.

All fourth-year students spend 500 hours in direct practice in a community working with a social service provider chosen by them at the end of their third year, according to their fields of interest.

Students are, for example, placed in schools, hospitals, facilities for the treatment of addiction, or work with older people. They can also be placed in the criminal justice system, at non-profit organisations or at government institutions (Department of Social Development).

The partnership formed between the University of Pretoria (UP) and these placement organisations is critical to the success of the programme.

Registered social workers at the placement organisations act as so-called 'field-supervisors' who take responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of our students and assist them in gaining access to the different stakeholders in the community, while four UP practice lecturers take responsibility for the academic standard of the programme.

Students in the MWP 400 module take responsibility for facilitating their own projects in cooperation with the community. In 2023, no less than 70 projects will be undertaken in 32 different placement organisations.

Community engagement projects address social issues and structural injustices in South Africa to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities in relation to the environment. Projects are aimed at meeting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, adopted by 193 countries in 2015.



Some examples of projects are:

- *The future-framed project* in Lethabong, which empowered unemployed individuals in the community through skills-development workshops where they restored discarded picture frames to be sold at a Christmas market
- *Kalerato with love* – Empowering caregivers of children in an Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD) in Mamelodi to bond with their children and form strong attachments
- *Active aging* in Soshanguve – Keeping older persons active and engaged in their world

continued on page 2

Module MWP 400, Community engagement, is embedded in a human rights approach that regards the worth and dignity of all people and their participation as fundamental. Community engagement is much more than meeting a perceived need by implementing a project (often based on the students' own perceptions).

To really make a difference in communities, the development of a deep understanding of the lived experiences of people is essential. Students are guided through a process of critical reflection on their engagement with different communities.

All community engagement activities are informed by the needs and strengths of the particular community. An innovative development in the MWP 400 module, which is aimed at engaging the community in developing and sustaining projects, is the integration of group work with community engagement projects.

By engaging with community members in smaller groups, community participation is promoted in the following ways: These groups of community members may inform the specific project by sharing their needs and strengths for inclusion in a project, which can serve to sustain the project once it has been terminated, and it may also form an integral part of the project to ensure that the students address the needs of the community and not their own.

Our greatest strength in sustaining the MWP 400 programme is the cooperation received from field placement organisations and field supervisors who take in our

students without demanding compensation for their time. Without these partnerships the programme would not survive. Our greatest challenge in the MWP 400 programme is the lack of funding to finance projects and enable our students to reach communities that are not close to campus.

Sponsorships and subsidies for student transport are essential to ensure the sustainability of the MWP 400 Social Work in Practice programme.

Since we function in a non-profit environment and the students' future employers and the beneficiaries of our services are not in a position to sponsor the projects, external sponsors have to be found. Financial sustainability therefore needs to be achieved through intersectoral collaboration.

Even though community engagement (if implemented correctly) is quite challenging and requires students to develop critical thinking skills, community engagement modules are sometimes viewed as being inferior to theoretical modules.

Although there is a common misconception that social work students merely hand out food parcels, community engagement is not philanthropy or 'doing good' to others.

I am grateful to be working in a department and faculty where community engagement is valued and where I can contribute to the development of the social responsiveness of the citizens of our country.

I have great appreciation for the team of colleagues who have been involved in MWP 400 (and other) practice teaching modules over a period of many years, and I am thankful to the students and communities who have taught me about their lives.

Winning the Community Engagement award means a lot to me on a personal level as I will be retiring at the end of 2023 and I truly appreciate being acknowledged for my dedication to my career of more than 30 years.

It is very important for the Faculty of Humanities and the Department of Social Work and Criminology to be recognised for their contribution to the communities we serve and the students we prepare to enter the world of work.

For my colleagues in the Department who share my joy in winning this award, it is a confirmation that community engagement is being recognised for the important role it plays in the educational programme of students in our Department and on a wider platform.

I would like to encourage all students involved in community engagement in whatever form to always remember that it is not about *you*, but about the community. Listen to people's stories and you will discover that they often already have the answers to difficult situations, but need you to walk with them on the road to discovering their strengths.

Community engagement is not something you do to people, but something you do *with* them.

Partners without borders: COVID-19 as a disrupter and facilitator

Prof Grace Ngai (Head: Service-learning and Leadership Office - Hong Kong Polytechnic University)



'A Walk to Remember' – PolyU and UP students, along with students from USRN universities, collaborated to create a learning experience to raise awareness of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in the metaverse.

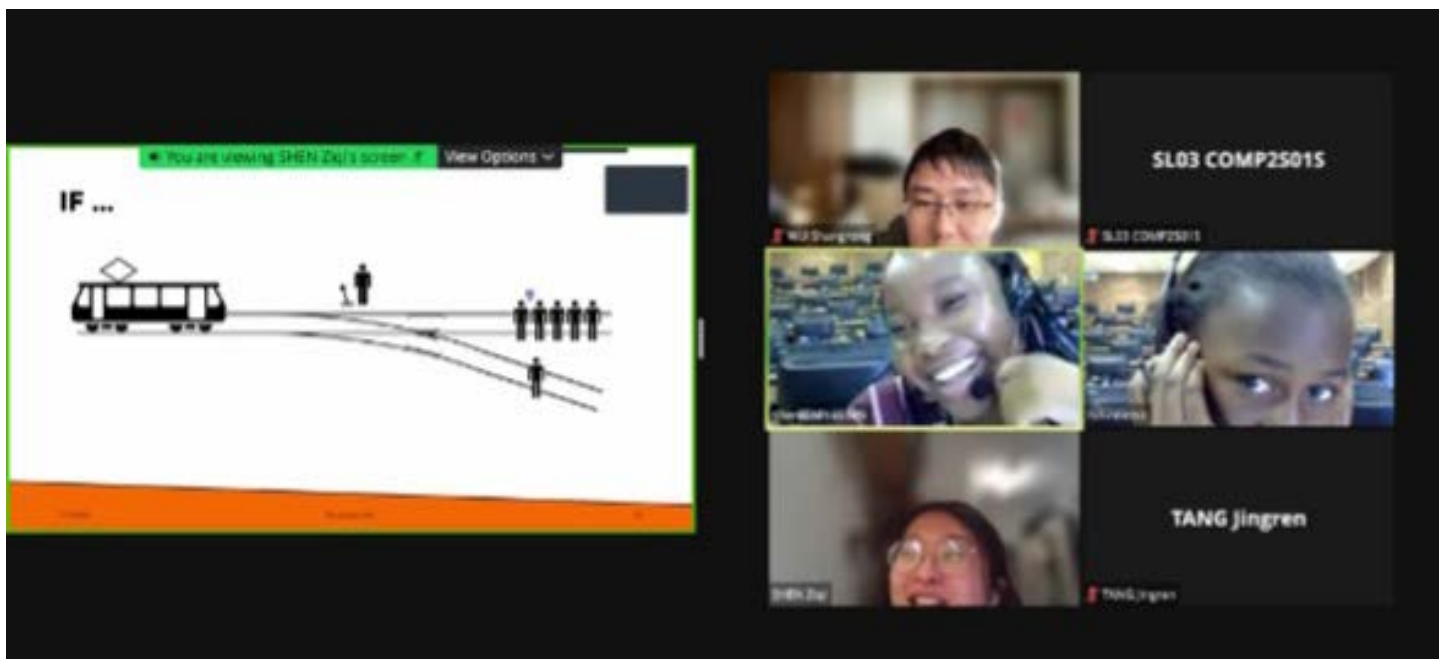


Mamelodi learners learn how AI object recognition engines are constructed during the short course

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on universities around the world. With campuses closed and face-to-face instruction impossible, many learning activities had to be adapted or suspended.

Service-learning and community engagement were perhaps the most impacted. Not only was physical contact impossible, but many community partners were struggling to find new ways of keeping operations afloat and did not have the space or energy to accommodate student service-learning teams.

continued on page 4



Mamelodi learners and PolyU students share a joke during a lesson on AI ethics.

As devastating as COVID-19 was, student learning could not stop because of the pandemic. Community needs also did not go away because of COVID-19.

One unforeseen upside of COVID-19 was that suddenly everyone became an expert in internet communications. Even the most technophobic community partner would suggest Zoom meetings to communicate!

Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and the University of Pretoria (UP) have a longstanding relationship through the University Social Responsibility Network (USRN). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, PolyU and UP had explored further collaboration on many occasions, but costs and scheduling always got in the way.

COVID-19 changed all this. Freed from the boundaries of distance, PolyU and UP collaborated to design innovative projects to make it possible for their students to serve different communities.

For our first collaboration we assembled two mixed teams—one

made up of students from UP and PolyU, and the other consisting of learners from the Mamelodi Campus and a secondary school in Hong Kong. The university students taught the learners digital storytelling and helped them to create a short movie starring themselves. In the process, the university students and the learners interacted with people who did not look like or speak like them and learned to communicate and work together.

This ambitious but very successful start, which provided the university students with an opportunity to learn and the learners with an enjoyable experience, emboldened us to try larger-scale collaborations. Subsequent initiatives included a Digital Leadership programme for USRN during which students built a metaverse museum to raise awareness of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers.

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workshops were also presented, which introduced learners from UP's Pre-University Academy at the Mamelodi Campus to AI and even drone coding.

Online communication will never be as optimal as face-to-face communication and although numerous challenges—from the time zone difference to load-shedding—had to be overcome, the students enjoyed the learning experiences.

In the case of the STEM workshops, PolyU students especially appreciated the Mamelodi learners' undisguised enthusiasm, for example, when they successfully debugged a problem in their code, or when they completed a task.

Going forward, we hope to continue with these collaborations. In January 2024, PolyU will send a team to Pretoria to conduct a STEM workshop for Mamelodi learners, this time in person.

Furthermore, discussions are being held with a view to a green energy project during which PolyU and UP students can collaborate and learn together, both online and in person. Such collaborations would never have been thought possible before COVID-19, which has turned out to have been not only a disrupter, but also a facilitator!

Art, empathy and inclusion: My experience in Thessaloniki

Danelle van Wyk (Art Education Part-time Lecturer and Master's
Candidate: Department of Humanities Education, UP)



Danelle van Wyk teaching Greek students at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



Mouth painter Anton van den Bergh during his visit to the Groenkloof Campus. Using special paint brushes and tools, he demonstrated to art education students how to paint with their mouths.

Visitors to the city of Thessaloniki with its welcoming community enjoy the mouth-watering food, the lively atmosphere and the dreamlike scenes the city offers. As they walk around, they come across historic buildings and fascinating ruins from the Roman and Byzantine eras.

While I was completing my honours degree, my research focused on the 'mouth painting paradigm' in the context of 'We and the Others', which was the theme of Dr Raita Steyn's project. In line with this research, in October 2022, I participated in an awareness project at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUT), Greece.

My role, which was to assist where possible, included setting up an exhibition of University of Pretoria art education students' works depicting social awareness issues, in the foyer of the University of

Thessaloniki. These artworks focused on people with albinism and the mouth-painting method. Those attending the exhibition watched a performance of Arthur Molepo's play, *Mama, I want the black that you are*, after which I presented a talk on how art can be used to create social awareness of albinism. On another occasion, Dr Steyn and Prof Stergios Proios allowed me to conduct a practical class on different forms of art with theatre students from the AUT and to discuss the challenges faced by mouth painters. I

explained how people can overcome physical disabilities and related difficulties, even impossibilities, by exploring alternative ways of doing things, for example by holding paintbrushes in their mouths to create works of art. This experience enabled me to:

- learn how to generate empathy and awareness in a community through knowledge and

participation;

- enhance the process of creative thinking through comparative approaches on an international level, i.e. between Greek and South African world views; and
- expand my own world view as a person and as a student in the context of 'I' and the 'Others'.

Through my visual arts instruction and class activities I have realised that socially we are often exposed to different situations that challenge us both morally and intellectually. Some things we see as ordinary may be considered as 'otherness' by other communities.

However, when we accept and share our differences as aspects of the same human existence by sharing and learning from one another, we promote inclusion through awareness and understanding.

continued on page 6

Through art, be it visual or theatrical, we can communicate with anyone, regardless of language barriers. Whether we speak English or Greek, visual literacy addresses both 'us' and the 'Others'.

In conclusion, my experience as a future teacher and as a group member was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enhance my understanding and share it with others.

This collaboration will be cherished and will significantly impact my future studies. I want to thank the students and lecturers at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for allowing me to be part of the experience and taking us on a tour of the university and the city. I extend my appreciation to my lecturer Dr Steyn, Arthur Molepo and my fellow student, Success Mdluli, who accommodated me on this trip.

Mouth painting requires a great deal of skill, patience and dedication. Artists who are unable to use their hands use this technique for creating drawings, paintings and other inspiring works of art.

Change makers

Oletilwe Molebatsi (Marketing and Fundraising Manager: Lesedi la Batho)



The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of LLB's long-term partners and has contributed in different ways to the work done there.

Students from the University volunteer at the LLB Community Centre and assist by maintaining and

From 23 to 26 January 2023 Lesedi la Batho (LLB) conducted workshops on gender-based violence (GBV) and human rights. The purpose of the workshop on gender-based violence was to raise awareness of this problem among the new Lesedi la Batho Skills Training cohort to enable them to act as agents of change who infiltrate the community at large, educating others and increasing knowledge about GBV at the community level. The workshop, attended by 90 beneficiaries at the Lesedi la Batho Community Centre, focused on the importance of human rights and gender equality as a means to preserve human dignity.

The topics covered included:

- What is GBV?
- What causes GBV?
- Human rights

Previously the fight for gender equality was fought by women, for women. More recently, our outreach team has reported a noticeable shift that indicates that men feel the imbalance of justice when their rights ought to be protected.

Men are increasingly alleging that when they experience trauma and abuse their cases are not treated with the same urgency as women's complaints. Despite this, women still feel that GBV affects only women and children, and seem to be unaware that men can experience it too.

During the event men spoke openly and honestly about their experiences and women realised that men also experience abuse. With this new knowledge, the female participants felt more optimistic about inviting men to join the fight against GBV.

upgrading our computers, updating training manuals and offering support with the training process where required. Through its donation initiative, the University donated non-perishable goods that we could distribute among our community members, as well as computers that we use for our computer skills training course offered to the youth.

We would like to thank UP for their contributions to Lesedi la Batho's initiatives and hope that our partnership will be strengthened by our common goal, which is to improve the quality of life of the people in our community.

We want to thank all those who participated in our workshop— together we will make a difference.

Promoting children's rights to environmental and climate justice

Moyahabo Thoka, Stanley Malematja, Fortunate Mongwai and Lebohang Dube (Centre For Child Law)



'Nothing for them, without them.' This is the approach taken by the Centre for Child Law (CCL) in its efforts to promote the inclusion of children and encourage their participation in claiming their right to environmental and climate justice.

Section 24 of the Constitution guarantees and protects everyone's right 'to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-

being and to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations'. Children are among the most vulnerable members of society and are more exposed to dangers associated with environmental harm.

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Environment, air pollution, water pollution and exposure to toxic substances, together with other

types of environmental harm, cause the deaths of 1.5 million children under the age of five every year and contribute to disease, disability and early mortality. Climate change also exposes children to a risk of harm. Due to climate change, South Africa, like other countries, is not spared from unprecedented weather conditions, such as the floods that recently caused massive destruction in KwaZulu-Natal.

continued on page 8



respect for child participation in the agenda of environmental and climate justice, the workshops provided a platform for children to express their views on the Draft General Comment No 26: Children's Rights and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change, published by the United Nations Committee for the Rights of the Child.

The workshops enabled us to sufficiently consider the above recommendations and, most importantly, enabled children to have a voice and ensure that they are not excluded from issues that affect them in the present and will affect them in the future.

One learner in Moroke said: 'I am happy that you are talking to us. As children are not seen as important, people want to make decisions that will affect us without asking us how we feel, even though we will be the ones suffering 30 years from now'.

The Special Rapporteur found that children are often not included in the participatory process on matters that involve them, particularly those relating to environmental and climate justice. The Committee on the Rights of the Child and other stakeholders therefore recommended that states should:

- i. ensure that educational programmes increase children's understanding of environmental issues and strengthen their capacity to respond to environmental challenges;
- ii. ensure that the effects of proposed measures on children's rights are assessed before they are taken or approved;
- iii. collect information about sources of environmental harm to children and make the information publicly available and accessible;

- iv. facilitate the participation of children in environmental decision-making processes and protect them from reprisals for their participation or otherwise expressing their views on environmental matters; and
- v. remove barriers that children face when trying to access justice for environmental harm to the full enjoyment of their human rights.

To advance the participation of children, the CCL partnered with Mining Affected Communities United in Action and hosted two consultative workshops at two high schools, namely Ntoampe Secondary School in Moroke Village, Ga-Sekhukhune, Limpopo and Phulong Secondary School in KwaThema Township, Springs, Gauteng. To promote and show

Another learner expressed concern, stating that 'even our home gardens do not thrive like they used to because there is either no rain at all, or too much rain that drowns my grandmother's seeds, but I did not know what to call it until now'.

A learner from KwaThema expressed gratitude, stating that 'I did not know that climate change affects me in my everyday life; I thought that it is something that affects other people in other places.'

As an outcome of the workshops, the children made written submissions to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which means that their voices have now been added to the General Comment on Children's Rights and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change.

Mentorship: The power of human interaction

Patrick Mbongo (Senior JCP Mentor)



compellingly convey similar and different perspectives. The mentors are given the opportunity to practise their newly developed skills, initially on each other and later with the JCP students.

Since the mentors are developing the same skills as those that JCP students start acquiring while completing the module, the guidance towards perfecting those skills is best facilitated through human engagement.



The JCP students are essentially prepared to engage with their teammates and community partners through a combination of online content and structured and unstructured in-person engagements with their mentors.

JCP mentorship gives individuals a unique opportunity to engage with community projects while developing and facilitating managerial, organisation and mentorship skills. JCP brings together unlikely coherent elements and combines them to present significant contributions to society.

The mentors who assist students completing the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology's (EBIT's) Joint Community Project (JCP) module are a critical link between the coordinators and all the second-year students in the programme. They guide more than 1 600 students by supporting them in navigating their projects with their community partners, which means that they need excellent communication and people skills. Interactive mentorship development workshops, which are facilitated

in collaboration with Curiosity Campus, train the mentors through a series of meta patterns and basic facilitation skills.

These skills include supporting and listening, giving and receiving feedback, asking clarifying questions and the responsibility of care. One of the most meaningful meta patterns is the dynamic of matching and mismatching.

This fundamental aspect of deep learning in effective and authentic communication, entails the many ways in which separate entities can

As mentors, we are part of a system much bigger than ourselves that provides the opportunity to apply technical and professional skills—a system that connects us to younger students, and through them to multiple community members. Being a part of such a system that enables sustainable human connections on many levels is humbling and enlightening, and emphasises the power of human interaction.

The Interconnectedness of Moja Gabedi and Reliable House: An occupational therapy perspective

Amanda Aitken (Fourth-year occupational therapy student) and Dr Michelle Janse van Rensburg (Department of Occupational Therapy and COPC Research Unit)



Nestled in the centre of bustling Hatfield, Moja Gabedi and Reliable House are two University of Pretoria (UP) community engagement sites that are making a world of difference. Moja Gabedi was previously an illegal dumping site and Reliable House was a run-down space teeming with criminal activity.

These sites are now model facilities for the restoration of homeless individuals and people who use drugs (PWUD), and facilitate their reintegration into the community. Importantly, it is the interconnectedness between these sites that enhances their efficacy in enriching the lives of vulnerable individuals in our society.

Reliable House was established by the University of Pretoria in 2017 and provides a place of safety and the fulfilment of basic needs for up to twenty homeless men in the area. Many of these men use/d drugs, and Reliable House offers a way for them to build and rebuild skills and improve their circumstances.

It is through Reliable House that the clients can access housing, food and employment opportunities that would otherwise not be readily available to them. In terms of health- and social services, the Community-oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) operates from Reliable House.

It is a partnership between the City of Tshwane and the Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) Research Unit that falls under the UP Department of Family Medicine, which provides medical and psycho-social services to PWUD through a harm-reduction approach.

In 2020, the success achieved with Reliable House led to the establishment of Moja Gabedi, a beautiful community garden that is an oasis in the centre of the city.

With green expanses of lawns, flourishing flower beds, vegetable gardens, animals (such as bunnies, peacocks and ducks) and walkways, it provides many unique benefits for

the residents of Reliable House that set it apart from other programmes. Moja Gabedi offers a change of environment and immersion in nature. Most of the Reliable House residents' daily tasks are undertaken within the narrow borders of the Reliable House property. Boredom is one of the major indicators for substance use relapse, to which this potential isolation contributes negatively.

However, having access to the Moja Gabedi grounds offers the residents an opportunity for a change in scenery and some variety in their environment. Since Moja Gabedi is situated diagonally across the road from Reliable House, the residents can easily move between these spaces and feel more integrated in the community structures.

It is well recognised that time spent in nature and in sunlight significantly improves mental health. Both homelessness and substance use are fundamentally linked to the experience of mental health problems. Immersion in the rich, natural Moja Gabedi environment can therefore lead to an improvement in well-being for residents with mental health struggles.

Moja Gabedi also offers a space in which residents can experience some solitude. At Reliable House, the residents share small units in groups and are rarely able to be alone. The gardens provide a space in which they can temporarily experience respite

continued on page 11



Reliable House residents working in the Moja Gabedi Community Garden

and exist alone in nature, without needing to consider any of the nuances of interacting with others. Significantly, Moja Gabedi also provides full-time employment for at least four Reliable House residents who receive a monthly stipend for gardening work, maintenance and security. Within the context of homelessness, money and financial management are difficult concepts to address.

However, the combination of receiving a steady income and not having living expenses provides an opportunity to save for their futures, invest in skills development (such as obtaining driver's licenses), and have increased independence with regard to managing their financial situation.

These duties also allow the employees to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility. Due to societal stigma surrounding both homelessness and substance use, these residents are not necessarily trusted and respected by the rest of the community. By trusting the residents with key responsibilities at Moja Gabedi, their self-esteem and sense of belonging is greatly improved.

They are also able to experience a sense of ownership of the grounds, as they have tangibly contributed to the structures and environment at Moja Gabedi. Coming from a context associated with having little of your own, this ownership is essential for an improved sense of self-worth.

Furthermore, engaging in daily tasks and routine has been found to be vitally important in improving mental wellbeing and consistency (Grant, 2022). These employed individuals are able to contribute meaningfully to the upkeep of the beautiful gardens, experience pride in their work, reduce boredom and are productively occupied during the day.

Reliable House residents not working at Moja Gabedi are employed at Springbok Park in a similar manner on a weekly cyclical basis, thus allowing them to experience similar benefits, albeit on a smaller scale, while improving the surrounding community spaces.

Moja Gabedi also provides a conducive space for Reliable House residents to participate in a variety of therapeutic group sessions. Throughout the

year, social work and occupational therapy students work at the sites in work-integrated learning fieldwork blocks and also collaborate with a non-profit organisation, Pitsa Ya Mamepe, which provides skills development by repurposing 'trash' into sellable products.

These skills groups and support groups, operating out of Moja Gabedi workspaces and grounds, equip the residents with skills to enhance their transition back into their families, the workplace and the community.

Moja Gabedi and Reliable House are two sites that have been established in Hatfield and provide immense benefit to the community. Each site is pivotal in the functioning of the other. Moja Gabedi provides a new and enriching environment, employment opportunities, ownership, routine and a unique setting for therapeutic services for Reliable House residents.

It is a perfectly maintained natural sanctuary in the centre of a concrete city, which can also be utilised by students and community members. It is the symbiotic relationship between them that truly reflects the benefits of these community engagement programmes.

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Young children who talk well, will perform well academically in the future: 33 years of services at the Clinic for High-Risk Babies

Dr Esedra Krüger (Senior lecturer and programme coordinator: Speech-Language Pathology, and head of CHRIB), Dr Renata Eccles (Senior lecturer: Speech-Language Pathology), Caitlin Rawlins and Khadija Nuruddin (Final-year Speech-Language Pathology students: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)

The Clinic for High-Risk Babies (CHRIB), which is part of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology at the University of Pretoria, was established in 1990 as a centre of excellence for families of babies and young children with communication difficulties. The decision by Prof René Hugo, Prof Brenda Louw and Prof Alta Kritzinger to start the clinic was based on emerging evidence of neurodevelopmental plasticity in early childhood proving the long-term benefits of early intervention.

The aim of the clinic was to include a focus on prevention and early communication intervention in the speech-language pathology and audiology curriculum. The CHRIB's mission was, and still is, to assume responsibility for infants and young children at risk for communication disorders along with their families to contribute to the Department's mission - empower the community.

CHRIB clients are families and little ones under the age of four years old with histories of preterm birth and low birth weight, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, cleft lip and palate, hearing loss and developmental delays, who have complex communication needs.

The CHRIB team is made up of Dr Esedra Krüger and Dr Renata Eccles, both qualified speech-language therapists and audiologists, and an audiologist who has a special

interest in paediatric audiology. The team conducts one to two assessments per week, in which final-year speech-language pathology and audiology students participate as part of their early communication intervention training.

The team conducts transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary play-based arena assessments with parents and their little children to assess the communication skills of the infants and children, and to plan a way forward in cases where communication difficulties are diagnosed.

Families are then afforded the opportunity to attend weekly early communication intervention sessions either in person at the departmental clinic, or virtually. Intervention is provided by the final-year speech-language pathology students under the supervision of Dr Eccles and Dr Krüger. A family-centred approach and teamwork are central to all activities as the evidence-based foundation for early childhood services. Families come from diverse backgrounds and socio-economic settings and service charges are levied accordingly.

The value of CHRIB lies in families being coached to facilitate their young children's communication development in their natural environments. The caregiver-coaching approach to early communication intervention is

based on the highest level of evidence available. Caregivers, as the community members served by the clinic, form the central stakeholders in all activities.

Caregiver-coaching assists caregivers in acquiring and implementing strategies for early communication stimulation. This approach moves beyond demonstrations by student therapists to facilitation by students to ensure successful implementation by caregivers, who are considered agents of change for their children's communication abilities.

Adults need more direction than only verbal instruction; they require live feedback and individualised coaching to effectively implement strategies for intervention to ensure positive outcomes for their children.

At the time of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, CHRIB was a pioneer in the Department when it implemented tele-intervention services to ensure continuity of services. Telepractice is the use of telecommunication technology for remotely rendering professional services by linking therapists to clients for assessment, intervention and/or consultation.

The tele-intervention framework at CHRIB is still in place as an alternative to face-to-face intervention sessions to support families who reside outside

continued on page 13

of Gauteng. Globally, telepractice has become a successful platform to offer health care, including early communication intervention. In some instances, families cannot, however, attend the intervention clinic and are then followed up on a consultative basis.

CHRIB not only serves a particular community but has become a valuable asset in the clinical training of undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

In addition to the final-year speech-language pathology and audiology students who attend the clinic on a rotation basis and conduct assessments and treatment sessions under the supervision of qualified professionals, third-year students observe assessments to gain skills in preparation for their final year and beyond.

CHRIB is also visited by educational psychology, nursing, occupational therapy and orthodontics students and professionals. The CHRIB assessments are conducted using a one-way mirror to provide students with an opportunity to observe and engage in the analysis of a child's communication development.

Students accredited with Early Communication Intervention and Aural Rehabilitation (KMP482), the main module that CHRIB is situated in, may deliver early communication intervention services in a range of settings, fulfilling different professional roles and functions, and demonstrating knowledge and skills at the forefront of the early intervention field.

At CHRIB, students conduct play-based assessments within a transdisciplinary team, conduct interviews with families, perform

case management, consult with professionals about clients, and render weekly intervention to support the communication development of young children. Caregivers are clients and customers of CHRIB, which means that students are held to the same high standards as professionals.

The perspectives of students are important to the CHRIB team as they, along with the families served, are central stakeholders in the module and therefore also in CHRIB. Final-year students Caitlin Rawlins and Khadija Nuruddin, who attended CHRIB during the first term of 2023, have reported positive learning experiences as attested to in the following reflections:

'I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at CHRIB thus far. I have learnt so much in the past couple of weeks. I have learnt the value of a team-based approach and how looking at a child holistically is so essential in the Early Communication assessment process. Through in-depth case discussions and question sessions with Dr Krüger and Dr Eccles, as well as the reading of literature, I have gained invaluable knowledge in the short time that I have been at CHRIB. Gaining first-hand experience by being involved in play-based assessment enhanced my perspective and understanding of how the whole process of CHRIB works and why it works so well. Times for feedback and reflection have been extremely beneficial in gaining case-specific knowledge and skills that can be applied outside of the CHRIB setting for a more holistic approach to early communication assessment and intervention. I was nervous to start the year off with CHRIB, but have quickly come to love it and look forward to it every week.' **(Caitlin Rawlins)**

'CHRIB is a valuable learning opportunity for students as it provides insight into multiple aspects of working with Early Communication Intervention (ECI) clients and their parents. First,

students are able to observe and be a part of a transdisciplinary arena assessment, which is unlike any other practical experience. The clinical case presentation and discussion during and after the assessment aid in helping students connect information about the case in a concise manner, while at the same time helping them to see the bigger picture about the clients' level of functioning and the risk factors that might have contributed to it. Furthermore, students learn how to conduct an interview with the parents and also provide feedback in a sensitive yet productive manner, which provides useful information to facilitate the child's development.' **(Khadija Nuruddin)**

The clinic, being an allied health care early intervention clinic for high-risk infants and toddlers and their families, sets out to support young children's communication development. The service aims to ameliorate risks and the effect of developmental disability, and to support toddlers' learning so as to improve their future academic outcomes and ultimately improve their families' quality of life. Children who talk well before starting school will perform well at school and this is the premise on which our services are built.

CHRIB is an integral part of the early communication intervention training of undergraduate speech-language pathology and audiology students, and ensures that students are trained in teamwork and collaboration so that they are academically well-rounded to enable them to effectively engage in communities and render contextually relevant services in their future places of work.

If you are interested in accessing services from CHRIB, please contact Dr Esedra Kruger on esedra.kruger@up.ac.za.

A visit to Freedom Park

Ms Faith Nkosi (Senior Research Assistant: Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases)



and spirituality. It is divided into two parts: the Garden of Remembrance (S'khumbuto and Isivivane) and the //hapo – Freedom Park Museum with exhibits that focus on the earth, ancestors, peopling, resistance and colonisations, industrialisation and urbanisation, nationalism, the Struggle and nation, and continent building.

On 23 February 2023, second-year Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSC II) students from the University of Pretoria visited Freedom Park as part of the Veterinary Professional Life course (VPL 201). They were accompanied by Prof Melvyn and Ms Faith Nkosi from the University's Faculty of Veterinary Science's Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, Ms Londiwe Mahlangu from the Unit for Community Engagement, and Pierre Brouard and Ms Christi Kruger from the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender.

The VPL module focuses on life skills development and covers personal wellness, self-awareness, societal roles, leadership, cultural diversity, and financial and veterinary communication skills. The theme of cultural diversity and transformation is used to enhance the understanding of the wide range of people with whom veterinarians interact professionally.

Freedom Park is a site that is rich with South African history, culture, heritage, indigenous knowledge

The students' visit started with a guided tour through the Museum and the Garden of Remembrance. This was followed by a lecture presented by Pierre Brouard and Ms Christi Kruger, which led to an open discussion on cultural diversity, gender equality, power, privilege, and how South Africa has transformed. Such discussions are crucial eye-openers to the different professionals trained by the University and help to raise awareness of their surroundings and equip them for their future roles.

IPECP in sub-Saharan Africa: A Dirisana+ Project workshop

Miss Sthembiso Ncube (PhD candidate and module coordinator: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology) and Dr Renata Eccles (Senior lecturer: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho



From 13 to 20 March 2023, the five institutions in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) that form part of the Dirisana+ Project, participated in an Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice (IPECP) workshop. The workshop was part

of the Dirisana+ Project, specifically the IPE theme. The Dirisana+ Project, which is funded by a Capacity Building Grant in Higher Education (CBHE-JP), involves seven higher education institutions, including the University of Witwatersrand

and the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University in South Africa; the University of Namibia and the Welwitchia Health Training Centre in Namibia; the University

continued on page 15

of Turku in Finland; and Maastricht University in the Netherlands.

Through training aligned with community and societal needs, the project aims to improve undergraduate and postgraduate student learning experiences, as well as graduates' readiness for the workplace. As health science educators, members are committed to uplifting students and community engagement through innovative technology and quality education practices in southern Africa. The goal is to build capacity in southern African countries through cooperation with European partners and private and public stakeholders in research and education.

The aim of the IPECP week was to review the current IPECP activities at the institutions and to jointly develop a collaborative future road map for IPECP in SSA. During the week, Prof Jascha de Nooijer and Mr Rikus Nieuwenhuis from Maastricht University visited the various SSA institutions.

Prof de Nooijer is the Director of Education for Health and professor of Interprofessional Teaching and Learning. On 15 March 2023, Dr Eccles (chair of the IPE theme within the Dirisana+ project), Miss Sthembiso Ncube and Prof Jeannie van der Linde (Head of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology at UP) accompanied Prof de Nooijer and Mr Nieuwenhuis to UP's Daspoort Poli Clinic, where they were joined there by other health care professionals, including Ms Nthabiseng Phalatse from Occupational Therapy, Ms Megan Wrigglesworth from Speech-Language Pathology, Dr Gerhard Botha and Mr Kennedy Mafala from Family Medicine and the Daspoort Poli Clinic, and Fatima Abdullahi from Nursing.

During the morning Mr Mafala, the Clinic Manager, and other doctors informed the team on the activities

at the clinic and the services offered. There were discussions between the various departments regarding the current interprofessional activities undertaken by students at the clinic and possible opportunities for future collaboration. Furthermore, the team was fortunate enough to engage with third- and fourth-year audiology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology students who were doing their practicals at the clinic at the time of the visit.

Prof De Nooijer and Mr Nieuwenhuis discussed their interprofessional experiences at the clinic and in general with the speech-language pathology and occupational therapy students, who all mentioned the collaborative practices and competencies that they have learnt and which they were looking forward to implementing at the Daspoort Poli Clinic to benefit the clients and families they serve. They also indicated that they would prefer to participate in collaborative practical engagements sooner during their practical modules. Overall, the visit to this clinic was successful and showcased the collaboration between certain departments, while also highlighting the areas where IPECP can be implemented to a greater extent.

On the afternoon of 15 March 2023, a feedback and discussion session

was held between the various health care profession departments to brainstorm how IPECP can be taken forward. Representatives from different departments were present, including the Departments of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, Physiotherapy, Nursing and Radiography. A number of exciting suggestions were made, and an overview of future plans was mapped out for further discussions on how to incorporate IPECP more in the theoretical and practical modules of all the health care profession programmes.

The visits to the five SSA institutions ended with an online workshop on 20 March 2023, which was attended by colleagues from various institutions and departments. The purpose of the workshop was to reflect on the past week and discuss possible collaborations between the departments and institutions (Figure 1).

All in all, the IPECP workshop showed how interprofessionalism is growing in SSA and how frequent meetings, discussions and collaborations can lead to better service provision to and by students and health care professionals. IPECP is an important aspect to be included in the curricula of health professionals and should be incorporated into all aspects of professional development.

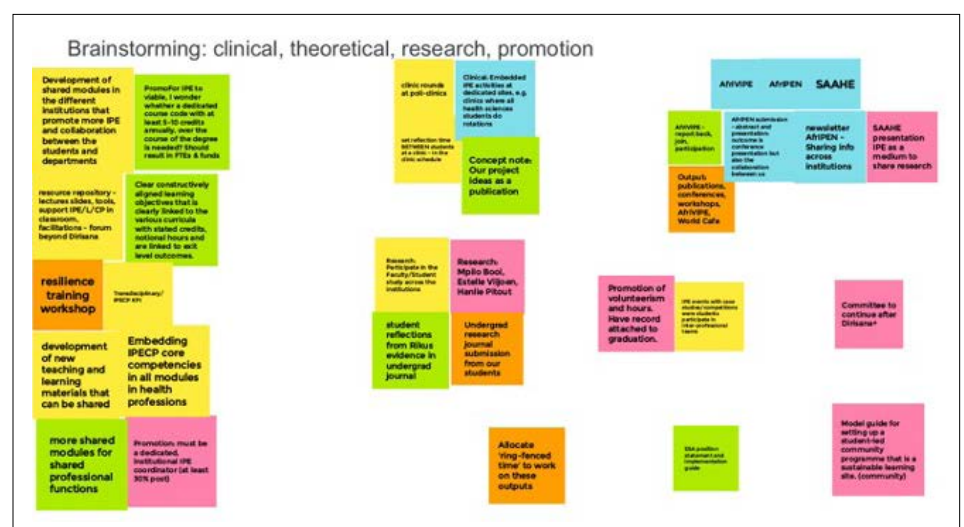
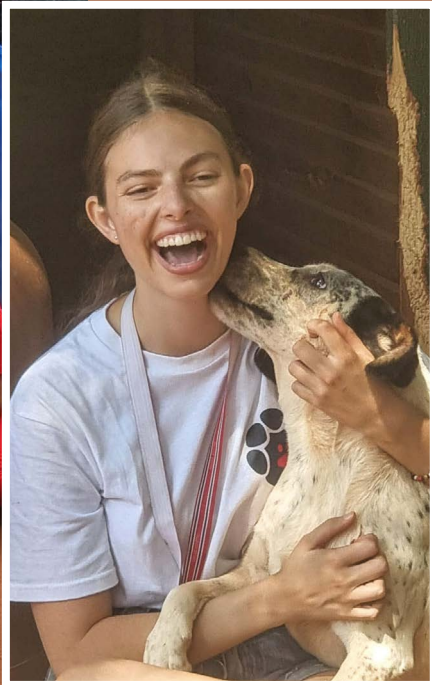


Figure 1:



KhuTow! UP residence RAG partners team up to make a 'pawsitive' impact at Wollies Animal Shelter

Bianca Frost (Head of Residence at The Tower: Department of Residence Affairs and Accommodation)

The University of Pretoria (UP) has always been committed to promoting community engagement among its students. UP RAG (Reach out and give) is an official student-driven, non-profit fundraising and community-driven service organisation at the University.

The University's Department of Student Affairs and Accommodation, commonly known as TuksRes, is a significant role player operating under the RAG umbrella. Every year different residences team up as RAG partners in various community engagement initiatives.

This year House Khutso, a female residence, and The Tower, a male residence, teamed up as RAG partners. Combining their names, they refer to themselves as *KhuTow* and are determined to make a difference in the community in 2023.

On Human Rights Day, celebrated on Tuesday, 21 March 2023, the students of KhuTow spent the morning assisting at the Wollies Animal Shelter, which is very much in need of extra hands and willing hearts.

This non-profit organisation situated in the North of Pretoria provides care and shelter for abandoned and abused animals and relies heavily on donations and volunteers to keep its doors open, and the students from the University of Pretoria were more than happy to help out.

Working in groups, the students spent the morning cleaning all the dog kennels and the cat sanctuary to ensure that the more than 600 dogs and 400 cats have a safe and clean environment to live in. Once the work was done, they also

spread some love and joy by taking time to play with the puppies and give them some much-needed socialisation and affection.

The community engagement initiative not only provided a valuable service to Wollies, but it also gave the residence students an opportunity to learn about the importance of animal welfare and the impact that volunteering can have on a community. They came away from the experience with a greater appreciation for the work that animal shelters do.

Overall, the community engagement initiative at Wollies was a great success. The students were able to make a difference in the lives of the animals at the shelter while also learning valuable lessons about community service and compassion.

Animal rights: Human values – social action

Promise Mokhatla (Head of Outreach for Commercii, the EMS Faculty House)

The Unit for Community Engagement in the Department for Education Innovation at the University of Pretoria sponsored a visit to the Wollies Animal Shelter hosted by Commercii, the faculty house of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). All the students in the Faculty of EMS—from undergraduate to postgraduate—were invited to attend the event.

The purpose of the visit to the animal shelter was to educate the students about animal welfare and to encourage them to offer their assistance as volunteers. Most of students who attended the event are passionate about animal welfare and love animals, and were eager to learn more about them. As we were shown around the shelter, they enthusiastically interacted with the animals.

Wollies, located at 101 Rooikat Street in Hestea Park, Pretoria North, was established in 2003 and serves Pretoria North and the surrounding areas. The shelter's initial purpose was to sterilise as many animals as possible, but it soon started taking care of abandoned, neglected and abused animals and applied for registration as a non-profit, pro-life organisation that does not receive any government funding. Wollies offers the animals life and cares for them until they find suitable homes.

Wollies strongly believes that if people are educated on the benefits of sterilisation, and if the procedure was more affordable, there would be fewer abandoned, abused and homeless animals. Although South African legislation and policies do not formally recognise animals' capacity for experiencing feelings and sensations, the Animal Protection Act No. 71 of 1962 prohibits animal cruelty (see section 2(1) <https://www.gov.za/documents/animals-protection-act-22-jun-1963-0000>).

Many abused or abandoned animals need help and Wollies Animal Shelter responds to calls regarding cases of abuse, general neglect of animals, as well as reported cases of dogfights. Some animals are surrendered to Wollies by owners who can no longer take care of them while others are seized, confiscated or impounded from unimaginably horrendous circumstances. Every animal admitted into their care is provided with veterinary



treatment, food, water, exercise and a safe and comfortable shelter. The Wollies motto is: Taking in and finding new homes for stray and unwanted pets.

The students were privileged to participate in this event as they learned about different dog and cat breeds, how these animals were saved, how to care for them and what they can do for our communities.


They also learned how crucial it is to take proper care of pets and report any instances of animal abuse to the closest animal shelters. Since there are so many animals at the shelter, the majority never have an opportunity to play outside or connect with people.

During our visit the animals were able to interact with people and most of them seemed to enjoy being taken for a walk. Furthermore, the employees at the shelter were grateful for our assistance, which gave them a chance to rest while watching how we interacted with the animals.

This event was organised with the assistance of the Department for Education Innovation's Unit for Community Engagement, and the knowledge gained by the EMS students will enable them to become advocates for animal welfare in their communities.

And now we see: Learning from visually impaired children


Ansurie Barwise (Fourth-year student in the
Faculty of Education)



Jonas Ndlovu, a visually impaired
BEd student, interacting with one
of the tactile books



Prinshof Learners with Special Education
Needs (LSEN) School: Blind children leading
the way while the students followed



UP art education students briefly
experienced the challenges of visual
impairment when they were blindfolded
and had to rely on their other senses

On 7 March 2023, the fourth-year Art Education Methodology class visited Prinshof School for the visually impaired to gain insight into the needs of the learners and prepare us for our community project, 'We and the Others', which required us to create tactile educational books for them.

I expected to be moved, to become emotional and to get inspiration for the tactile book I intended to create, but I did not expect to be impressed. As harsh as it may sound, I expected these children to need constant assistance, but what I experienced rocked me to my core. Looking back, I realised that upon arriving at Prinshof I was actually the one who was blind and these visually impaired children helped me to see.

We see blindness as an impairment, and if we consider how much we rely on sight in our everyday lives, it probably is. However, these children succeed in turning their 'impairment'

into hyper-intelligence. They may not be able to see like sighted people, but they see the world in a unique way which we will never fully understand.

They 'see' with their ears, relying on sounds bouncing off walls and doors. They 'see' with their noses and are able to smell whose T-shirts belong to whom when their clothes become mixed up. They 'see' with their fingertips and read and understand a language that consists of raised dots (Braille), which all feel the same to me.

I am not afraid of the dark, but when we were blindfolded to experience what blindness feels like, I realised that what I feared was being out of control. As an artist and a teacher my biggest fear is losing my eyesight and never being able to create and see colours, but when we walked into the creative arts classroom I was amazed by the octopuses in beautiful colours made by these exceptional children who take the 'dark', the feeling of being out of control, and master life's challenges anyway.

I needed a visit to a school for visually impaired children to realise how impaired my vision was about them. They genuinely impressed me! I no longer feel sorry for them and look forward to creating a useful pedagogical tool that will empower them to gain even more knowledge.

About this project:

Dr Raita Steyn from the Department of Humanities Education promotes art as a means of communication and encourages the exploration of diverse communities with different

environmental problems. To help art education students understand the challenges visually impaired children face, she arranged a visit to Prinshof LSEN School. The students were blindfolded to force them to rely on their other senses. The approach aimed to broaden students' conceptual spectrum and generate knowledge through direct exposure to inclusiveness and socio-cultural awareness. As part of the fourth-year students' community engagement project, Dr Steyn encouraged her students to create tactile and pop-up books that could be experienced through senses other than vision. All the books will be donated to Prinshof LSEN School.

Student's own voice

Jonas Ndlovu, a visually impaired BEd student, interacted with the JMK451 Art Education students' pop-up and tactile books. In an email to Dr Steyn he wrote:

'I would like to extend my greatest appreciation to you, but mostly to your students, for the incredible initiative you have embarked on of making art inclusive and accessible to blind learners, and the exceptionally warm reception you always give me. As you had me in your class on Tuesday to observe what you have worked on thus far, I was elevated to new levels of sensational intuiting about not only the prospects of what you are doing, but the future of our universe and humanity, as in habitat. The first-hand experience was in itself a marvel, incomparable to anything. The experiences you will create go beyond what you think of them; it is the real impact you will have...'

Catch them in the crèche: A collaboration to improve education

Dr Jeanette Wentzel and Dr Sunday O. Ochai (Faculty of Veterinary Science)



Community engagement is at the centre of any meaningful impact on a society. Constructive interactions with the community make the need for engagement not only desirable, but very necessary as it brings about more sustainable, equitable and viable change within the community of interest. The University of Pretoria, through the Faculty of Veterinary Science, has been carrying out various research activities on veterinary and medical diseases in the Mnsi community in Bushbuckridge for the past decade.

These research activities have been conducted at the Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station, one of the University's satellite campuses. The Faculty has been able to

establish a community veterinary programme that supports many farmers and provides health care and clinical support to pets and livestock in the Mnsi community.

Since the rural community of Bushbuckridge experiences a high level of unemployment and high dependence on grants, collaborations and community engagement activities are needed to bring about sustainable change and improvements.

Through the collaboration and engagement activities undertaken in 2017, the team developed a collaborative relationship with the Ngalava 'Noah's Ark' crèche in the community. The crèche was founded

in 2014 by a community health worker from the area who offered home-based care for children who were left alone at home while their mothers went to fetch water from the community water point, or went to search for jobs. Initially the crèche was attended by only three children, but over the past years the number has grown significantly to more than 103 children ranging in age from a few months to six years.

The school, which is staffed by very committed and energetic community volunteers led by a very passionate principal, relies on school fees paid by parents to cover running costs and the provision of two daily meals for the children.

continued on page 20



of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, are taught about the need and place for community engagement in building sustainable and equitable communities.

In February 2023, a group of students and employees from the master's programme in Global Health which is a degree

Many parents are unable to pay, and no funds or material support is provided by the Department of Education or the Department of Social Development. As part of the collaboration, funds have been raised through personal donations, the Friends of Ngalava and Rotary member support from a club in Johannesburg.

To demonstrate their buy-in and how invested they are in this project, members of the local community have donated some building materials and manual labour to improve the state of the school.

This collaboration has resulted in the installation of a JoJo tank-water system, the building of a new classroom, new toilets to replace the pit latrines, repairs to the original classrooms and the provision of learning materials, carpets, curtains and cushions.

The building and renovation projects also provided much-needed work opportunities as only labourers from the community were employed.

Since this is a farming community that resides at the wildlife-livestock-human interface, the kids in the crèche are taught and exposed to

the importance of the One Health concept, which is a collaborative approach to common health that emphasises the fact that the health of humans and that of animals are interlinked as they live in a shared environment.

It is therefore clear that many benefits could be derived from working across and within disciplines to confront issues that are prevalent at the interface of different sectors. In July 2022, a group of delegates from the Faculty of Veterinary Science, under the auspice of the 'Dean's walk-shop' visited the crèche to further assess the progress of the engagement activities.

During the visit, the kids welcomed them with a song about the coronavirus and how to keep safe, but even more interesting was the song they sang about the importance and place of One Health in their community. There is no better time to capture the minds of the little ones than while they are still available to be 'caught'.

This crèche does not serve only the children and the community, but has become a centre where students from the University of Pretoria, especially from the Department

offered jointly by the University of Pretoria and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp, visited the day care centre. The students and staff, who came from different countries across the world, visited the Mnisi community and more importantly the crèche, as part of their orientation workshop.

They were welcomed to the facility and informed on the history of the place and the roles of other individuals, societies, organisations and the University in sustaining the facility and how this has impacted the kids. The students reflected on how motivated they were to establish such engagements in their various communities and places of endeavour.

To conclude, parents would be well advised to consider what Charles Portis says in his novel *True Grit*: 'If I had received good instruction as a child, I would be with my family today and at peace with my neighbours. I hope and pray that all you parents in the sound of my voice will train up your children in the way they should go.' It is safe to say that it is cheaper and easier to raise a child well than to repair an adult, and this can only be done through collaboration as it takes a village to raise a child.

Development of university-community engagement partnerships

Dr Eugene Machimana, Prof Ana Naidoo [Virtual], Ms Londiwe Mahlangu and Mr Albert Matlheketha
(Department for Education Innovation, Unit for Community Engagement)

Attending the Rhodes University's 2023 Community Engagement (CE) Symposium as a group of the Unit for Community Engagement was amazing. The CE symposium was attended by roughly 20 national and international institutions. It was beneficial to learn about the theories, practices, and institutional positions of CE at different universities.

We were able to critically evaluate the work that we undertake at the University of Pretoria (UP) thanks to the Symposium, which was highly educational. As several universities asked their community partners to present at the symposium, it was also interesting to hear other voices rather than only academics.

Through the presentations, several of the concepts that were considered for introduction at the Unit for CE were confirmed. We want to adopt places as the CE Unit for a year and work on various transdisciplinary initiatives there. We may then co-author articles with the community partners through our involvement and publish them, for example, in the CE Newsletter. The community partners will be able to use this as a platform to document their extensive collection of indigenous knowledges.

We gained knowledge from the excellent presentations given by colleagues and special guests. We did identify gaps too, as some institutions carried out their CE initiatives in silos. The importance of the transdisciplinary approach that we are advocating for community sites was once again reinforced by this. UP's concerted approach of embedding CE in teaching, learning and research across all nine of its



faculties has received praise from several presenters. Our CE Forum's topic on compliance was crucial since it touches on the morality of implementing CE with community partners. More information regarding the safety precautions in CE sites stimulated the interest of other universities. Through CE orientation, site evaluations, and ongoing engagement with community partners, students' safety is given top priority.

CE has established a presence in higher education. It is crucial to make sure that the ethical framework is in place since it is developing and evolving. We are inspired to take more active steps in accordance with the ideals of mutual benefit to enhance the communities we work with. The following is the abstract which we submitted for our presentation at the CE symposium:

Abstract

The lack of conceptual clarity in community engagement (CE) in South African higher education (HE) hinders the development and growth of HE-CE partnerships to its full potential. Insufficient attention paid to the voices of the community

partners creates barriers in CE, thus hindering the promotion of social and cognitive justice. As in Australia, the process of developing practice and policies on CE is ongoing and hopefully it would clarify the confusion in HE about the concepts of 'community engagement', 'community service' and 'community outreach'.

CE at the University of Pretoria (UP) is defined as the "planned, purposeful application of resources and expertise in teaching, learning and research in the university's interaction with the external community to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes in ways that are consistent with the institution's vision and mission".

CE is underpinned by the Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) methodology which is an innovative method of data collection mainly concerned with issues of power relations, inequality and social justice. When community partners' voices are acknowledged in HE, participants therefore perceive themselves as contributors to and mutual beneficiaries of new knowledge that is generated in the HE-CE partnership.

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Matters of interest

- Community engagement [e-book 2023](#)
- The next Community Engagement Forum meeting will be held on Monday, 26 June 2023.
- 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 2023).

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