

# Gugulethu is a learning community



Gugulethu is a learning community—the Chance 2 Advance team: Dr Genevieve James, Chevaan Peters, Rose Mashaba, and Amisha Benode, together with Unisa Learning Ambassadors David Mabusela, Nzwiba Mubila, Jimmy Molewa, Phumelele Nokele and Richard Chauke

The Unisa Chance 2 Advance team recently returned from a large-scale learning intervention in the community of Gugulethu. Participants at this initiative included community members of Crossroads, Nyanga, Philippi, Samora Machel, Heinz Park, Athlone, Delft, Paarl, Mfuleni, Eerste Rivier, Manenberg, Langa, Strand, KTC, Kraaifontein, Wynberg, Mitchells Plain & Kayelitsha.

The programme contained a total of 65 workshops hosted across 14 venues located throughout the Gugulethu area.

According to project manager Dr Genevieve James, the conditions on the ground were challenging. “Before we embarked on the programme there were several serious concerns related to the high instances of gang-related violence in the area. We had to seek the support of local safety networks and the South African Police Services in Gugulethu. Further to this, while in the Cape, harsh weather conditions presented much difficulty with torrential down pours, freezing weather and even snow on the mountains. The city’s Disaster Management was on high alert as flash floods destroyed many homes in informal settlements. Despite these adverse conditions, attendance was recorded at more than 6 000 people, who enthusiastically participated in every session, displaying their acute need for pertinent learning opportunities.”

Thirty Unisa academics braved the cold weather and energetically facilitated their workshops in venues across Gugulethu, some of which had to use generators since the power supplies were interrupted due to the weather. An additional 34 facilitators were sourced from the Western Cape, KZN and other provinces, said James.

“Members of the community were highly appreciative of the diverse yet relevant programme as evidenced in the positive feedback. Many South African communities are experiencing serious systemic, structural and social dysfunction. When communities choose to become learning communities, they can discover pathways out of poverty, unemployment and ill health and act towards social justice and community well-being.”

The Chance 2 Advance is a project in the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) and strategic oversight is provided directly by the PVC. To the delight of the eager participants, Professor Narend Bajinath greeted the community via Skype. The PVC spoke of the value of community learning for development and social justice. He discussed the scourge of youth unemployment and urged participants to empower themselves by prioritising education. He encouraged communities to work toward a culture of continuous learning and congratulated the participants for their enthusiasm and keen participation.

Representing the community of Gugulethu, Makabongwe Ngqwebo expressed to the PVC the significance of such a programme to the community of Gugulethu. He further explained that an event of this nature was the first of its kind in the region and should be spread across all communities. He thanked the PVC for his commitment to ensuring that all South African communities had access to quality learning opportunities.

Director of Community Engagement Professor Sunette Pienaar paid a special visit to the thrilled community. She observed several workshops in progress and expressed the social justice vision of Unisa. She warmly congratulated the community on their zeal for learning and shared how Unisa works with communities to ensure sustainable community development.

The Chance 2 Advance will return to the community of Gugulethu and the Western Cape for follow-up programmes.



Prof. Sunette Pienaar (Director: CE) addressing a C2A Class in Gugulethu



Participants engage in group work.



C2A community-based home fire safety workshop, demonstrating how to eradicate a fire with an extinguisher



Captivated members of the community braved the cold and rains to attend workshops.