

# Ubuntu Nexus

The spirit of collective humanity and interconnectedness

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (CEAD) DIRECTORATE

**NEWSLETTER**

April – June 2024



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# Editor-in-Chief's Note



**Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni**  
**Director CEAD**

Time has truly passed swiftly, and the MUT community has achieved remarkable milestones in community engagement projects throughout 2024. As we step into 2025, we reflect on the diverse and impactful ways these initiatives have made a difference.

As the CEAD Directorate, we are quite motivated and encouraged to see the positive gesture for the support that we provide to the MUT community in its efforts towards making a meaningful difference to our communities.

In the second quarter project teams successfully implemented thirteen projects along the CE strategy focus areas: Food Security and safety,

Environmental Sustainability and Resilience and Skills development.

It has been quite heartwarming to see our academic staff making inroads into the far-flung rural areas of uMzimkhulu to restore the dignity of rural livestock farmers by promoting the development of viable and sustainable livestock enterprises through assisted reproductive technologies (ART), thus increasing marketing opportunities.

As support Directorate we have been able to capacitate project leaders on the dynamics of community engagement through community engagement forum sessions, an initiative that takes place on quarterly basis. The purpose of the forum session for this quarter was to encourage project leaders to understand challenges brought in by various interests of stakeholders that could in some way influence progress on the implementation of CE projects, and how to overcome them.

The forum also brought clarity to the CE policy and procedures followed for successful implementation of CE projects.

Community engagement is a non-funded mandate and partnerships become essential to leverage on available resources. For this purpose, a sizable number of partnerships was initiated in this quarter with Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and civil organisations such as Seed of Hope Community Development, Dennis Hurley Centre Trust Centre and Sithanda Ukwenza NPO.

Following the approval of the framework for the scholarship of engagement for MUT it has become necessary that the CEAD Directorate capacitates MUT community on carrying out their CE projects in a scholarly manner and to realise outputs such as research publications, policy briefs, workshops and seminars, public lectures, dissemination of results, etc, as these have a great potential to strengthen the scholarship of engagement at MUT.

For this quarter academic staff members have been capacitated on integrating CE into research.

The capacitation was based on the principle which indicates that CE is a shared enterprise between universities and their community partners, which involves the co-creation of new knowledge to produce knowledge outcomes and products that are valuable assets for both academia and the public interest.

I wish to thank the senior academic staff members who have been at the forefront in the implementation of CE projects.

This has embodied the popular proverb “Inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili” which translates to “wisdom is sought from the elders”.

I am grateful to my colleagues (i.e. the CEAD team) for continued support in ensuring that MUT projects are carried out in a manner that upholds MUT values of respect and integrity with great professionalism.

In closing, I wish to welcome Dr Shozi who joined our Directorate on 1 June 2024 as Deputy Director.

I wish him a pleasant and fulfilling career growth at MUT. He has my unwavering support in this very important space of Higher Education.



## Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi: Advancing Community Engagement Excellence at CEAD



**Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi**

Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, a highly accomplished academic and community development expert, is making a significant mark as the Deputy Director of the CEAD Directorate at MUT. With decades of experience in adult education, peacebuilding, public participation, and gender advocacy, Dr Shozi has brought renewed energy and strategic vision to CEAD’s initiatives.

Since joining CEAD in June 2024, Dr Shozi has been instrumental in steering innovative programmes that align with CEAD’s mission to address critical societal challenges through meaningful and inclusive community engagement. Under his guidance, the Directorate has amplified its focus on projects that promote social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and capacity-building for underserved communities.

Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi was born in KwaZwelibomvu in Mbumbulu, near Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, and was raised by a single mother. Due to political violence and faction fighting, his family moved to Mary Grey area next to Esidumbeni, Ndwedwe, northwest of Durban.

Dr Shozi holds a BA degree, a Diploma in Adult Basic Education, and a Master’s in Community Development from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a B-Tech in Business Administration from UNISA.

He also obtained a Diploma in Business from Damelin, and a PhD in Public Administration from Durban University of Technology (DUT). His PhD thesis focused on utilizing action research to build peace in Njobokazi village in the Mkhambathini Municipality in the Umgungundlovu District Municipality, in KwaZulu-Natal.

Prior to his move to MUT, Dr Shozi lectured at the DUT and served as Project Manager for the Imbali Education and Innovation Precinct. Dr Shozi has worked as an ABET facilitator and Project Manager, Advocacy Manager at the Provincial Parliamentary Programme, and former Commissioner and Chairperson of the Commission for Gender Equality. He is also involved in various non-governmental organisations, including serving as Deputy Chairperson for Sonke Gender Justice, Chairperson of the Valley Trust Board, and the African Child and Youth Community Development Project. These affiliations reflect his unwavering commitment to fostering equity, justice, and holistic development. His advocacy for gender equality and his deep involvement in public participation initiatives emphasize his dedication to creating spaces where marginalized voices are not only heard but amplified.

Dr Shozi's leadership reflects a deep commitment to promoting meaningful partnerships and empowering communities, embodying CEAD's mission to make a lasting difference in the lives of those it serves.



**Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi (front, left) taking an active lead in one of the Mandela Month initiatives in July 2024, setting a dynamic tone for his work at CEAD**

# Cultivating Young Minds: Highlights from the 2nd MUT Reading Project Competition



Front row (third, fourth, and fifth from left): Dr Nobuhle Ndaba, Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Dr David Ighodaro, along with external stakeholders who participated in the event

The second MUT Reading Project Competition was held on 6 June 2024, at Mbonini Primary School, Umlazi. Attendees included MUT staff from the CEAD Directorate, MUT Radio, MUT Marketing and Communications Department, principals from Ngilosi, Sukuma, Mjijimi and Emthethweni primary schools, English language teachers, reading project coordinators, and participating learners.

Grade 4 learners from five primary schools competed. The competition, initiated to improve English reading and comprehension, saw careful planning with a monitoring exercise to ensure readiness.

The event featured messages of support from Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director, CEAD; Naraj, from DoE, Bukhosibakhe Mzolo, Circuit Manager: Phumelela Circuit; and Dr David Ighodaro, CEAD Researcher, who all emphasized the significance of literacy.

The speakers highlighted the importance of reading for educational growth to develop the communities.

The competition began with a pre-selection process with the English subject teachers preparing Grade 4 learners and selected the top five from each school. The competition, judged by three adjudicators using a DoE rubric, focused on Grade 4 texts.

Mbonini Primary School emerged victorious, winning five of the six categories, with Emthethweni Primary School securing one trophy. Certificates of participation were awarded to all participants, with category winners receiving trophies.

The success of the second competition highlighted the collaborative effort by all partners to address literacy challenges and promote a culture of reading and academic excellence among young learners.

# Environmental Education and Sustainability (EES) Project Leads Durban Coastal Cleanup and Environmental Workshop



**MUT students preparing to clean up Winkelspruit beach area**

CEAD is delighted to report on the successful Durban Coastal Cleanup led by Dr Sibonelo Mbanjwa, Lecturer, Department of Nature Conservation, which took place on 10 May 2024, at Winkelspruit Beach in Amanzimtoti. The beach is renowned for its picturesque coastline but is also grappling with issues of litter and pollution. The event is a collaborative effort involving students from MUT, and it aimed at promoting environmental stewardship and preserving the coastal areas.

Equipped with gloves, trash bags, and a strong sense of purpose, the MUT student volunteers worked tirelessly to remove litter and debris from the shoreline. The collected waste included plastics, bottles, and other pollutants harmful to marine life. This hands-on experience allowed MUT students to improve the coastal environment while deepening their understanding of marine conservation challenges and solutions.

An Environmental Education Workshop also led by Dr Mbanjwa was held for primary school learners. The workshop, which took place on 12 April 2024, aimed to instil environmental awareness, and promote sustainable practices among 500 learners from primary schools in Umlazi i.e. Bavumile, Sizwakele and Emthethweni.

Through activities like sorting recyclables, tree planting, and creating eco-friendly crafts, learners did not only learn about environmental issues such as pollution and deforestation, but also gained practical insights into biodiversity and ecosystem conservation.

The workshop inspired learner to act in their schools and communities, fostering partnerships among schools, community organisations, and environmental groups.

# Environmental Education and Sustainability Project Hosts Community Climate Change Seminar



Participants actively involved in one of the sessions

The Community Climate Change Seminar, led by Dr Sibonelo Mbanjwa, took place on 5 May 2024, at Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences. It was a significant gathering addressing the critical issues of climate change impacting our communities. The event brought together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to discuss and find solutions.

The seminar featured informative presentations, lively discussions, and enthusiastic participation from attendees, highlighting the collective commitment to raising awareness and promoting environmental stewardship. It was a successful event, reflecting MUT's dedication to fostering positive environmental actions.



Participants displaying their certificates of attendance

# Ecosystem Rehabilitation Programme Facilitates iNaturalist Training and Snake Awareness Campaign

The second quarter of 2024 saw remarkable progress by the Ecosystems Rehabilitation and Restoration (ERR) team. iNaturalist training sessions were held on 16 and 17 April 2024, for learners and MUT students.

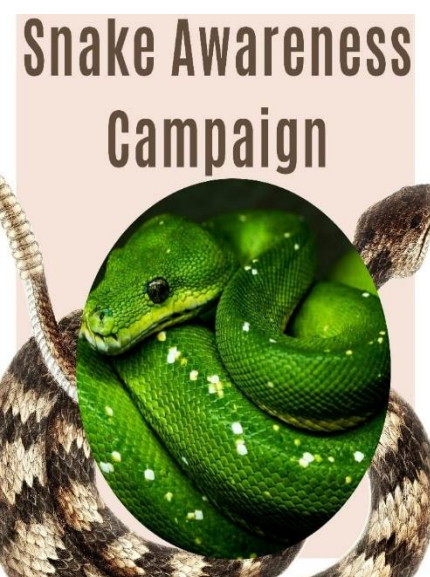
These sessions culminated in the iNaturalist Competition from 26-29 April, where MUT and Ndukwenhle students made over 1,000 plant and animal identifications.



Participants at one of the iNaturalist training session

This impressive contribution marked the first iNaturalist entries from Umlazi, enhancing species identification and monitoring in the area.

On 23 May 2024, a Snake Awareness campaign was conducted for Ndukwenhle learners, teachers, and MUT ERR students, led by Nkosi Sithembile from the Department of Nature Conservation. This initiative aimed to educate participants about snakes and promote safety when encountering wildlife, especially in preparation for the planned wetland rehabilitation at Ndukwenhle High School. The use of docile pythons offered a hands-on learning experience to dispel fears and misconceptions about snakes, highlighting the importance of these creatures within Durban's ecosystems.



- Public attitudes toward snakes often stem from myths and lack of understanding. Educating communities helps promote appreciation and conservation efforts, crucial for ecosystem health.
- Snakes play a vital role in ecosystems by controlling prey populations and acting as prey themselves. They contribute to nutrient cycling and serve as indicators of environmental health.
- When encountering snakes in homes, offices, or gardens, it is essential to stay calm, maintain distance, and seek professional assistance for safe removal.
- Raising awareness and understanding about snakes is significant for conservation efforts and promoting harmonious coexistence with nature.

# Local Entrepreneurial Skills Development Team Attends Entrepreneur Summit in Durban



**Dr Sibonelo Mbanjwa and SUESD project beneficiaries**

The CEAD Directorate is excited to report on the recent Entrepreneur Summit in KwaMakhutha, South of Durban. Held on 26 April 2024, the summit brought together entrepreneurs, industry experts, and community leaders to discuss economic empowerment and sustainable growth. A delegation from MUT, including 20 students and two staff members, joined 15 community members in engaging keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and networking sessions.

The event highlighted the role of entrepreneurship in driving social change and provided practical skills for sustainable business development. Key takeaways emphasized entrepreneurship as a catalyst for community development and the importance of collaboration for collective impact.

Participants were inspired to apply their knowledge towards addressing community challenges and initiating entrepreneurial ventures. Moving forward, Sithola Ulwazi Entrepreneurial Skills Development (SUESD) plans to conduct follow-up sessions, promote entrepreneurial initiatives, and foster partnerships to support community upliftment efforts, reinforcing its commitment to community



**Beneficiaries of the Entrepreneur Summit**

# Local Community Project Empowers Disadvantaged Youth with Computer Literacy Workshop at MUT



Standing fifth and sixth from the right, Batho Dube and Gwere Motta with tutors and participants at a training session

The Impilo Home Community Project, housed at Impilo Home, Dassenhoek, and led by Batho Dube and Gwere Motta recently conducted a computer literacy workshop at the Department of Office of Technology on the MUT campus. Dube and Motta are lecturers in the department.

Impilo Home is an orphanage that takes care of pupils with disabilities and children from disadvantaged families. Recognising a gap in computer literacy, the department identified an opportunity to provide valuable skills to MUT students

Held from 18 to 21 June 2024, the workshop aimed to equip 15 pupils from the Impilo Home, specifically Grade 10, 11, and 12 learners, with essential computer skills. Participants learned about basic computer components, window management, and key keyboard functions.

They learnt the Home Tab, focusing on Clipboard, Font, and Paragraph groups, and practiced creating tables, inserting illustrations, and managing headers, footers, and page numbers.

The Design Tab was used for page backgrounds, while the Layout Tab covered page setup and text box insertion.

In addition, learners enjoyed a tour of MUT's library, further enhancing their educational experience.

This workshop successfully provided the learners with valuable computer literacy skills, contributing to their personal and academic development.

# Amplifying Community Engagement Projects



CEAD proudly announced its exciting collaboration with MUT Radio, which began in the second quarter of 2024. This partnership aims to announce various faculty projects to the wider community through monthly broadcasts on MUT Radio.

The inaugural radio show, held on 26 April 2024, marked a significant milestone. Sithembile Nkosi, project leader of the Ecosystem Rehabilitation and Restoration Project (ERR), and Bulelwa Mafutha, a senior student in Nature Conservation and ERR Volunteer, discussed the project's goals and achievements, emphasizing its role in restoring local ecosystems and engaging High School students in environmental conservation.

Following this successful debut, on 31 May 2024, Dr Caiphus Hlungwani, leading the Food Security for Better Health (FSBH) project, and Nomvula Gambu, Manager of Masibambaneni Day-care Centre in Umlazi, discussed the FSBH's impact on community health and sustainable food practices.

These radio broadcasts serve as a platform for CEAD projects to reach a broader audience, showcasing their achievements and fostering community engagement.

# CEAD Hosts Stakeholder Engagement Meetings



Participants at the stakeholder's meeting

On 20 May 2024, CEAD hosted a stakeholder meeting to introduce the Funda Nathi Literacy (FNL) and Sithola Ulwazi Entrepreneurial Skills Development (SUESD) projects. The meeting took place at the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences. This significant event, led by CEAD Director, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, brought together 28 diverse stakeholders to discuss and plan the implementation of the projects.

Professor Nkonki-Mandleni took the audience through an understanding of community engagement at MUT and the mandate of the CEAD to support CE at MUT. She highlighted MUT's role in CE, explaining how the CEAD office supports academic staff in executing impactful projects. CEAD's Dr David Ighodaro emphasized the importance of stakeholder involvement in ensuring the success of the projects.

Dr Nobuhle Ndaba (FNL), and Dr Sibonelo Mbanjwa (SUESD), presented their respective projects. The FNL project aims to improve literacy among learners by harnessing both English and indigenous languages, boosting learners' self-esteem, and empowering teachers with effective methods. The SUESD project focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills among community members, providing support to those who excel to formally register their businesses.

The meeting featured open discussions where stakeholders shared their insights and expressed support for both projects. Dr Ighodaro explained the process of formalizing the partnership between MUT and the community, ensuring transparency and consent from all participants.

This meeting reaffirmed MUT's dedication to community-driven initiatives.



Seated fifth from the left, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni with participants at the meeting in uMzimkhulu



ART Project Leader Helen Mapeka

A stakeholder engagement meeting for the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) project was held on 21 June 2024, at the Anglican Church in Riesdale, uMzimkhulu.

The meeting was led by Mohleko Helen Mapeka, the project leader, and attended by Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni: CEAD Director, and Dr David Ighodaro, researcher at CEAD.

The meeting focused on presenting the objectives and plan of action for the ART project, which aimed to promote the development of viable and sustainable beef enterprises among farmers in the poor rural smallholder sector.

The engagement session provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the opportunities associated with implementing the ART project in the community.

The project seeks to build high-performing teams and networks of enterprises along the beef value chain through capacity building and the transfer of appropriate technologies, such as ART, to stimulate economic growth.

This initiative aligns with several South African government goals, including food security, poverty alleviation, employment creation, better health, crime prevention, improved quality of life, and economic growth. These efforts aim to improve the overall quality of life in rural areas, supporting the government's broader vision of inclusive development and social equity.

A significant part of the meeting was the formalisation of working relations, marked by the signing of consent forms, reinforcing the commitment to continuous improvement and innovation in beef cattle production in resource-poor sectors.

# CEAD Hosts Workshop on Enhancing Research Impact Through Community Engagement



Standing third from the left, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni with participants at the workshop

On 13 June 2024 the CEAD Directorate ran a workshop titled: Research- related Community Engagement for Outputs.

MUT academic staff members were capacitated to integrate community engagement with research through community-based participatory action research.

This event aimed to enhance the integration of community engagement within research.

Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, CEAD Director, led a session on research-related community engagement for outputs, providing diverse insights and strategies.

Dr David Ighodaro, CEAD Researcher, Engagement, made a presentation on developing a theory of change using the logic framework model, offering a structured approach to planning and evaluation.

Participants were given the opportunity to network and reflect on the day's learnings.

The workshop was a comprehensive session that equipped attendees with the tools and knowledge to effectively integrate community engagement into their research to realise outputs.

# JOIN US

# VOLUNTEER

# WITH CEAD



CEAD Directorate is excited to offer MUT students the chance to make a difference!

Why Volunteer? Volunteering with CEAD is a fantastic opportunity to contribute to meaningful projects, gain valuable skills, and make a positive impact in our community.

By giving your time and energy, you can help create real change.

Watch out for the following ways to register with the CEAD Directorate:

**\*Information Booth:** We will have a booth at university entrance at the beginning of each semester for on-the-spot registration and more information about volunteering opportunities.

**\*Student Organisations:** We will be partnering with student organisations to spread the word.

**\*Faculty and Staff Announcements:** Faculty and staff will be sharing opportunities in class and through departmental communications.

If you have any questions or need more information, feel free to contact the CEAD office directly:

**Phone:** 031 819 9422 / 031 819 9413

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*Be a part of something bigger.*

*Volunteer with CEAD and help make a difference!*

# CONNECT WITH CEAD

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## SPREAD THE WORD!

Help us raise awareness about MUT's community engagement efforts by sharing our newsletter with your partners, collaborators, friends, family, and colleagues.

Together, we can amplify our message and inspire others to join us in our mission.

Your Feedback Matters!

We value your opinion - Please feel free to share your thoughts with us!

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