

ABOUT OUR RESEARCH UKRI provided funding to assist in covering our costs in 2022

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Rural schools in South Africa face multiple challenges in providing learners with diverse skills and sufficient experiential learning required to advance effectively in modern society. Learners come from communities characterised by poverty, food insecurity, unemployment and most do not have households that provide an environment and sufficient stimulation to effectively support learning.

There is clear evidence in the literature and amongst educators that children learn through music and song¹. Children's choirs can also provide an excellent platform for psychotherapy, joyful learning, improving literacy levels, facilitating peer support/co-learning and community engagement. Food gardens that make use of the principles of regenerative agriculture² are another mechanism to give learners from rural and urban schools a more holistic understanding of the environment around them and human-nature interactions. Apart from teaching them about nutrition and sustainability, developing skills around growing food can set them on a path of lifelong learning, about caring for their environment and the various biological processes that occur (at its simplest level, water and carbon dioxide being converted to carbohydrates through interaction with sunlight). Action learning through activities such as gardening, provides the opportunity for abstract concepts taught in school lessons to become embedded in the mind through understanding how such systems operate in practice. Understanding such fundamentals is a critical part of the learning journey to generate the knowledge required for future leaders to deeply understand the interconnectedness between people and the environment, and towards achieving the interlinked goals of social and environmental justice

In combination, school choirs and regenerative agricultural activities may, therefore, help children develop soft skills such as communication, punctuality, decision-making, systems thinking, and so on. These are skills that are not easily developed within the traditional classroom setting. It is our view that knowledge generation is best achieved through theoretical teaching and practical application, but with the caveat that the learners should be empowered to co-generate knowledge through sharing their own understanding and perception with their peers to develop a shared body of knowledge³. Furthermore, we anticipate that inclusion of regenerative agriculture principles can improve perceptions about agriculture and the environment, with potential spill-over of the learning from the schools into the community in which the respective schools are located.

The Institute of Natural Resources (INR), whose mandate is to promote the wise use of natural resources for the benefit of the environment and society, teamed up in 2022 with UKZN (Prof Steve Worth) and PSI Projects (Dr Bridget Johnsen) to roll out a project that addressed the above in rural KZN. Prof Worth is an educational and agricultural extension specialist with 30+ years' experience in research, training and educational material development / knowledge creation. Dr Johnsen has worked for the past ten years supporting educational initiatives in rural schools, with a specific focus on supporting choirs to improve literacy and knowledge creation in underserved schools. Through this partnership, we have been working with five primary schools in the Isiphethu Sothukela Legacy Project, all of which have existing programmes of choir support and development (viz. Celimfundo, Nkosi Mjwayeli, Sifisosethu, Emadolobheni and Meadowsweet). This included the establishment of tower gardens, depicted alongside >>>>



Champagne Valley Schools Trust



The Isiphethu Sothukela Legacy Project

Portion 116 (of 43) of the Farm Driefontein No. 1389

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Siyacula Concert Programme

1.30pm Thursday, 20 October 2022

KEN McKenzie Auditorium, Drakensberg Boys Choir School

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER: Mr Dave Cato (Principal, DBCS)

INTRODUCTION: Bridget Johnsen

INDIVIDUAL CHOIRS and SONGS: Mbali Nkosi

Each school conductor will introduce their principal and themselves, then a selected chorister will introduce each song

SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL AND CONDUCTORS	SONG
Emadolobheni Primary	Principal: Mr R Mnculwane Conductor: Ms L Mazibuko	1. Oh what a beautiful morning 2. Bound for Jubilee
Inkosi Mjwayeli Primary	Principal: Mr KR Qhali Conductors: Ms S Khumalo and Mr A Gcaba	1. Sizohamba Naye 2. All things bright and beautiful
Celimfundo Primary	Principal: Mr JT Radebe Conductor: Ms N Hlatshwayo	1. The lion sleeps tonight 2. Touch the earth lightly
Meadowsweet Primary	Principal: Mr Z Mazibuko Conductor: Ms T Ngcobo	1. Now I'm a farmer 2. Colours of the wind
Sifisosethu Primary	Principal: Mr R Shabalala Conductor: Mrs N.G Mdakane	1. Harvest of love 2. Spring is in the air
New Cannan Primary	Principal: Mr I Dlangalala Conductor: Mrs R.N Chonco	1. H2O 2. Seeds of Friendship
Bhekuzulu Primary	Principal: Mr NM Khanyile Conductor: Mrs A.L Hadebe	1. Season of singing 2. Everything starts with a seed
MASS ITEMS (DBCS and ALL CHOIRS)	Principal: Mr D Cato Conductor: Mr Vaughan Van Zyl	Praise and Thanksgiving S.O.S by Quinley Wild

THANKS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Bridget Johnsen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Late Bill Carter will always be acknowledged at this Concert, for his vision, inspiration and dedication to the task of initiating this programme (with **Dr Anton Redelinghuys**), then consolidating it (with previous DBCS Principal **Mr Andrew Stead**) introducing the agriculture concepts, and developing the various personalities who have been able to continue it after his passing...including Judith Hawthorn and myself

Judith Hawthorn, who pioneered the music aspects of this Festival and compiled the Choir Development Syllabus for both Grade 3 and Grades 4-7, as well as providing ongoing consultation in 2022.

Drakensberg Boys Choir School Principal, Mr Dave Cato, DBCS Staff and Boys, for their participation and generous hosting of this Festival, for the transport of Emadolhobeni Primary School Choir and Christine Brass especially for the Catering, including providing additional casuals and sponsors:

Hillbillies (Bruce and Charmaine Black): For the Fruit

Sheshas Butchery (Rob Heerman and Annelize Parkin): For take-home SNACK PACKS

Mbali Nkosi, our new Conductor-in-Chief, for hours of work and travel on this project, for contribution to the training of choirs, developing conductors and for engagement of principals, supporting Mrs **Gill Green and Charlotte Bower**, who continue to selflessly give time and effort

The Institute of Natural Resources (Brigid Letty, Jon McCosh, Lunga Dlungwana and Mzo Mndali) and UKZN (Prof Steve Worth), as well as the TESF Team at Rhodes University (Grahamstown) and Bristol University(UK) for their generous funding of this programme and pedagogical research participation in Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures!

James Seymour (Swallowfield), Mark and Jo Hodges(Nyati House) and Pierre Carter (High Berg), for subsidised accommodation for programme participants over this festival and during the year

Rise UP, David and Zeenath Whitcomb especially, for ongoing educational support, massive infrastructure improvement and long lease of Champagne Valley Trust property as well as subsidised catering/hosting Principal Leadership events throughout the year.

Grant Edkins and Bongekile Ngcobo of Masivuselele NPC, for Principal Leadership Development Facilitation, which has included regular visits to each school in pursuit of an active Child Safeguarding Framework in each school and for PSI Projects, beyond the call of duty.

Bowwood and Vondeling Wines, for ongoing sponsorship of wine, prizes and gifts, as well as transport and cashflow support to ensure smooth running of the programme.

Global Giving, the oldest crowdfunding platform and all our regular and once-off donors who have contributed to the ongoing costs of the programme... be sure to use the following links or our Project Number 36652 to donate if giving this way, otherwise your gift may just go to their general fund:

<https://goto.gg/36652>

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/choir-singing-to-improve-literacy-in-600-children/>

ReWILD AFRICA, and Megan May Nelson, for discounted short film (in production) for fundraising

TO YOU, OUR AUDIENCE, for your presence, your moral support and even the smallest donation to our project through the above links

ABOUT THE ISIPHETHU SOTHUKELA LEGACY PROJECT

The Legacy Project was conceptualised in 2011 in the Central Drakensberg as a partnership program between the DOE(KZN), Drakensberg Boys Choir School and the Champagne Valley Schools Trust, involving now 7 schools. It embraces the concept of attracting investment into community leadership development through DBCS scholarships and the sharing of privileges by well-resourced institutions. Fundraising and implementation of the project falls to PSI Projects, a Western Cape NPC and PBO, under the leadership of Bridget Johnsen. Due to the project's success, it attracted funding in 2022 to be replicated in Pietermaritzburg/Greytown. The project has 3 essential components:

- a) **Principal Leadership Development:** In 2021-2022, quarterly workshops covered Child Safeguarding, facilitated by Masivuselele NPC. A variety of subjects in the past have included principals in community, financial management, HR in schools, governance, etc.
- b) **Music Teacher Empowerment:**
 - The Legacy Project appoints 3-4 local conductor trainers (usually volunteers or minimally compensated music teachers and/ or vocalists) who visit each school weekly or fortnightly (as the choir develops) to coach the choirs and their teachers in situ. Mbali Nkosi was appointed the conductor-in chief for 2022.
 - The 12-14 teachers from the 7 schools, together with the 3-4 conductor trainers, come to DBCS once a term for an intensive and higher level coaching session by qualified music teachers. The coaching sessions can be in any area.... from conducting, orchestration, accompaniment, rhythm and breathing.... to basic routines such as warm up or filing in and out of a room!!
 - Sessions aim to offer enrichment of the music teaching experience and are worthy of CPD points.
- c) **Choir Establishment in 7 less-resourced schools:**
 - Each school is assisted to establish a choir and then to empower the school's own staff (2 teachers per school) to run the choirs in perpetuity, as outlined above.
 - The whole process takes 3 years. Unfortunately, COVID lengthened this timeframe
 - We now have a well-developed syllabus to achieve the outcomes for both Gr 3 (involving an introduction to singing) and Gr 4-7 (involving chorister selection and choir establishment).
 - Choirs are limited to 60 members, so that bus transport to festivals is easily arranged....to date, by the DOE KZN and DBCS. This year, costs have been partly covered by PSI Projects.
 - Once a year, the choirs celebrate their progress in the full day Siyacula Festival at DBCS. This involves 4-6 workshops through which all the choristers rotate during the morning, with a substantial tea and lunch afterwards, the highlight being the Siyacula concert.
 - The teachers in the 7 participating schools, start running the choirs as fledgling conductors themselves from the second year, with conductor trainers visiting once a fortnight.
 - Participating schools may attend a local community festival each year, as opportunities and funds permit (eg Hilton Arts Festival, Festival in the Hills). Depending on progress, choirs are encouraged to participate in the ABRSM Initial Choral Examination.
 - 2023 will be the last year the Legacy Project is offered to the current cohort. Choirs are now in place and teachers are sufficiently trained. PSI Projects will continue to implement it, offering basic guidance of syllabus plus exam entries, and organise the Siyacula Festival.

To date, the Legacy Project has raised 2 full scholarships (R2M+) for a learner to attend DBCS for 4-5 years. One recipient, Sandiswa Mabele, from Nkosi Mjwayeli Primary, is now in Grade 6 at DBCS.

This year, due to funding requirements, the project focussed on the themes of Climate Change, Regenerative Agriculture, Conservation, Water and Environmental Sustainability, linking appropriate songs to tower gardens, which have been established in 5 schools. PSI Projects has supplied associated teaching resources sourced from the acclaimed Primary Science Program, to the staff and principals of all schools.