

# *Supporting Early Childhood Development in Monwabisi Park*



*An Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science.*

## **ABSTRACT**

South African policy has acknowledged Early Childhood Development (ECD) as an essential component to break the cycle of poverty. The City of Cape Town has made ECD an integral part of its informal settlement upgrading programme. Through field observations and consultations with key ECD stakeholders, we proposed an innovative outreach programme integrated into the urban environment of small neighbourhood centres to provide accessible ECD to all children in Monwabisi Park.

*This project report is part of an ongoing research program by students and faculty of the WPI Cape Town Project Centre to explore and develop options for sustainable community development in the informal settlements of South Africa. For more information please go to:*

<http://wwp.wpi.edu/capetown/>

*The following is an executive summary of a set of project reports that have been implemented as a website available at:*

<http://wp.wpi.edu/capetown/homepage/projects/p2010/ecd>

## **AUTHORS**

Heather Bell  
Isaac Barbour  
Alyssa Gottshall  
Courtney Sparrell

## **PROJECT ADVISORS**

Professors  
Scott Jiusto &  
Robert Hersh

## **SPONSORS**

Chris Giles  
VPUU  
Nomzamo Landingwe  
Mdebuka Mthwazi  
Sikhula Sonke

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The education of pre-school children is essential to South Africa's future because it breaks the cycle of poverty by giving each child the skills to reach his or her full potential. The need for more extensive Early Childhood Development (ECD) is recognized by key stakeholders throughout impoverished areas of South Africa. ECD has been shown to directly correlate with enhanced student achievement in primary school education. While government policies on many levels recognize the importance of ECD, there is currently no standardised system for supporting ECD programmes throughout the country. Much of this burden has fallen on under-resourced Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's). Extending ECD opportunities to children in in-

formal settlements is particularly challenging. In addition to funding limitations, the effort is hampered by a limited number of crèches (nursery schools) and public facilities for ECD activities. Even if more crèches were built, many impoverished parents or guardians could not afford the crèche fees. For these reasons, limited community participation within ECD programmes is emerging as a major concern for South Africans.

## BACKGROUND

The South African Department of Education defines ECD as "an umbrella term which applies to the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially" (The Department of Education of the Republic of South Africa, 1 May 2010). According to the

South African Constitution, it is the duty of the local government to provide ECD facilities for all children in the area. The City of Cape Town's ECD policy recognizes the city's responsibilities to protect the rights of children established by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to provide, fund and regulate ECD facilities, services and programmes and to assist other groups who are contributing towards ECD services. While many of these goals have been implemented in wealthier areas of Cape Town, most children in informal settlements are left without adequate ECD centres, funding, and resources (City of Cape Town, 2006).

One such settlement is Monwabisi Park, an informal settlement located in the township of Khayelitsha on the outskirts of Cape Town. The total number of people staying in Monwabisi Park is approximately 25,000, making it one of the fastest growing informal settlements in Khayelitsha (Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading, 2009). Monwabisi Park has a young age population profile, as the majority of the population is younger than 30. (Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading, 2010). There are currently eight crèches, or preschools, located within the informal settlement but only a small percentage of children attend these ECD centres. In a recent survey by Violence Protection through Urban Upgrading (VPUU), it was determined there are currently 2,700 children between the ages of zero and six living in Monwabisi Park. Of these 2,700, only 43% receive any type of formal ECD, leaving a majority of children without formal ECD ser-

vices. The available resources and infrastructure for ECD, provided mostly by the eight crèches located in Monwabisi Park, are unable to support the amount of ECD aged children living in the settlement. No outreach programme or standardizing measures currently exist in Monwabisi Park. This means the families of the 57% of children who do not attend a crèche have no support in providing developmental opportunities for their children.

Several outreach programmes have been designed and implemented in other nearby informal settlements in an attempt to reach children that are unable to attend a formal ECD centre. The most common ECD outreach practices rely heavily on outreach workers having direct contact with children and/or parents. Some current practices include parent empowerment, playgroups, and home visiting. Parent empowerment includes lending supplies to parents and outreach workers meeting with them one-on-one. Playgroups involve outreach workers working with small groups of children to provide them with the opportunities to develop. Through home visiting programmes, outreach workers visit families in their individual homes on a regular basis to do activities such as counting, songs, games, puzzles and blocks to foster their development. Sikhula Sonke, one of our team sponsors, has developed a home visiting program from their office in Khayelitsha. Sikhula Sonke's outreach programme has had great results with individual children, but currently only reaches 20 families. Since these programmes depend heavily upon one-on-one in-



teractions with the outreach workers, they are expensive to use on a large scale.

To provide ECD to a large number of children in Monwabisi Park, the city agency, Violence Protection through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) and Sikhula Sonke have developed a unique and innovative ECD outreach programme. This programme is part of the VPUU's Informal Settlement Upgrading Programme (ISUP) which aims to create a network of safe paths and community spaces as well as improved infrastructure throughout the settlement. In this plan, ECD would be implemented at public spaces called Emthonjeni sites. In Xhosa, Emthonjeni is a common name for a community gathering place particularly around a water source. Emthonjeni sites will be located around what is expected to be improved water taps. The improved tap will include a foot pedal and a drainage grate to eliminate community members' exposure to harmful bacteria. For details on the improved tap, please refer to Worcester Polytechnic Institute's 2008 Water and Sanitation Cape Town group project. This allows for both safety and health improvements to be established within the ISUP.

These Emthonjeni sites are intended to create a safe, interactive learning environment built into the urban landscape. The sites will contain physical components that can provide developmental opportunities to children with and without the use of outreach practitioners. Some physical elements will be geared towards stimulating children such as a balance

beam, stage and hopscotch. Others will be geared towards adult community members such as improved taps, wash basins and clothes lines to attract parent involvement within the childhood development process. Beyond the physical aspects, there will be several social community initiatives to ensure the usage and care of these sites. These initiatives include consultation with the neighbouring homes, providing incentives for families to watch over the children at the site, as well as creating a public ECD monitoring scheme to create a positive sense of change within the community.

The Emthonjeni concept provides a new and innovative approach to administering ECD on a larger scale. It builds ECD components into the existing surroundings while still creating a community-gathering place. Through encouraging community involvement and participation it places the education of children in the community's hands and promotes a community that values learning. Community members that live near the Emthonjeni site will provide constant adult presence around the taps ensuring the Emthonjeni site are safe for children at all times.



<b>Stage 1</b>	Introduction to ECD in Monwabisi Park	-Home and Centre-based ECD observations
<b>Stage 2</b>	Gain a broader understanding of ECD in South Africa	-Meetings with ECD organizations in Cape Town -Review of Policies
<b>Stage 3</b>	Conceptualize and Design an Emthonjeni Outreach Programme	-Ideas for outreach programme elements -Ideas for Emthonjeni design components -Pilot site observations -Draft of Proposals
<b>Stage 4</b>	Feedback and Revision	-Presentation with key ECD stakeholders -Finalization of Proposals

Figure 1: Four Stage Project Plan

## METHODOLOGY

### MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project was to support Early Childhood Development in Monwabisi Park through documenting current conditions and developing an Emthonjeni Programme. The project was broken down into the following objectives:

- ◆ Work with project partners and key stakeholders to refine objectives and working procedures
- ◆ Identify current centre-based and home-based ECD practices
- ◆ Determine the needs for further ECD programmes in Monwabisi Park and the services that are required to fulfil these needs
- ◆ Design an Emthonjeni Pilot site based on the VPUU's Informal Settlement Upgrading Programme
- ◆ Design an Emthonjeni Programme that can be replicated in other communities

### REFINE OBJECTIVES AND WORKING PROCEDURES

With our project sponsors, we developed a four stage process to guide our team in reaching our objectives (see Figure 1).

### CENTRE BASED ECD PRACTICES

To understand current centre-based ECD practices, we visited each of the eight crèches in Monwabisi Park. At each crèche, we observed the facilities and interacted with children as well as conducted interviews with the crèche principals and instructors. Most of the interviews were conducted in Xhosa with translations done by our co-researchers and Mdebuka Mthwazi, Sikhula Sonke's Programme Manager. In these interviews, we collected information such as the number of students, how much it costs to attend the crèche, and what concerns crèche principals had in running their crèches. This helped us gain a better understanding of the ECD being administered in formal ECD centres.

## HOME BASED ECD PRACTICES

We visited several families whose children were currently not attending a crèche. At each shack, we interviewed the guardian in Xhosa with the help of our co-researchers and Mdebuka. We asked parents why their children were not attending a crèche and if the children were had opportunities to play with any toys and books. We also observed home-based outreach work in Enkanini, another informal settlement in Khayelitsha, with the Family and Community Motivators from Sikhula Sonke. This improved our understanding of what type of stimulation children were getting at home and would later help us broaden our understanding of how children can be stimulated outside of an ECD centre.

## NEEDS FOR ECD

With the help of Sikhula Sonke, we led a discussion about community awareness regarding ECD with the Monwabisi Park ECD forum. The ECD forum consists of crèche owners and representatives from the Safe Node Area Committee (SNAC), a local leadership group that works with the VPUU on community redevelopment. The goal of this meeting was to start a conversation about outreach between the ECD stakeholders and the community of Monwabisi Park. In addition to our observations, we analysed three surveys about ECD in Khayelitsha and Monwabisi Park. The data from the three surveys was compared with our observation from Monwabisi Park to produce a well-rounded picture of available ECD in the settlement.

## EMTHONJENI PROGRAMME AND PILOT SITE

After reviewing all of the observations we made in Monwabisi Park, refining the ideas of our sponsors, and considering the input from other ECD organizations, we developed a vision for an Emthonjeni outreach programme. We also designed a pilot Emthonjeni site that would fit into designs the VPUU is developing for a pilot strip in C section. We created a digital model using Computer Aided Design (CAD) as well as a three dimensional physical model of the existing site based upon measurements we made at the actual tap location.



We presented our ideas for the overall Emthonjeni outreach programme as well as our pilot Emthonjeni site to a group of stakeholders including representatives from Sikhula Sonke, the VPUU, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Education, and the Monwabisi Park ECD forum. We made revisions to our ideas based upon feedback given at this presentation and compiled them into a detailed proposal for our sponsors, as well as a funding proposal for potential donors.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### COMMUNITY OBSERVATION



### ECD IN CRÈCHES

- ♦ Crèches are the main source of stimulation for children in Monwabisi Park.
- ♦ Crèches provided children with resources such as toys, books, and daily regimented programmes.
- ♦ Daily programmes include activities such as meal time, nap time, and learning how to use the bathroom.
- ♦ Some crèches also included English in their programme to introduce the language at a young age.
- ♦ The most common concerns of crèche owners were a need for more physical space as well as for a larger number of staff.



### ECD IN HOMES

- ♦ Children often received less stimulation in homes because their parents did not have access to materials such as toys and books.
  - ♦ Parents were most concerned about the safety of their children, as they could not complete all their necessary daily chores while still looking after their children.
  - ♦ None of the families we visited had access to any type of ECD outreach programme to supplement the care they provided in their own homes.
- The main concern of key stakeholders and community members throughout Monwabisi Park was providing ECD to children who are not currently in crèches. Crèche owners want to reach out to families whose children are not attending a crèche, but they either don't know how to do so or do not have the needed resources. The community expressed a desire for a programme that would help provide every child with access to the proper stimulation needed for development.

### OUTREACH PROGRAMME

In working towards designing an outreach programme for Monwabisi Park, we explored many different options for what programmes would benefit the community the most. One such option was to adapt the existing outreach programmes to fit into the redevelopment plans of the VPUU in Monwabisi Park. We found that home-visiting programmes such as Sikhula Sonke's Family Community Motivators programme are very effective, but are too expensive when implemented on a larger scale. Parent empowerment and playgroup style

outreach can be incorporated into an outreach programme, but would not serve our purposes as stand-alone programmes. After consulting with representatives from the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD) and Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU), we found that incorporating other programmatic elements into a network of Emthonjeni sites would provide the most well-rounded programme. The Emthonjeni programme is a cost effective option for an outreach programme that fits into the VPUU's spatial redevelopment plans. The hope is that this programme will be easily replicated on a larger scale due to the abundance of taps located throughout Monwabisi Park. The central locations of the taps allow the ECD outreach programme to be accessible to all community members. The potential of this programme lies in the high level of community involvement and the feeling of ownership of the Emthonjeni sites.



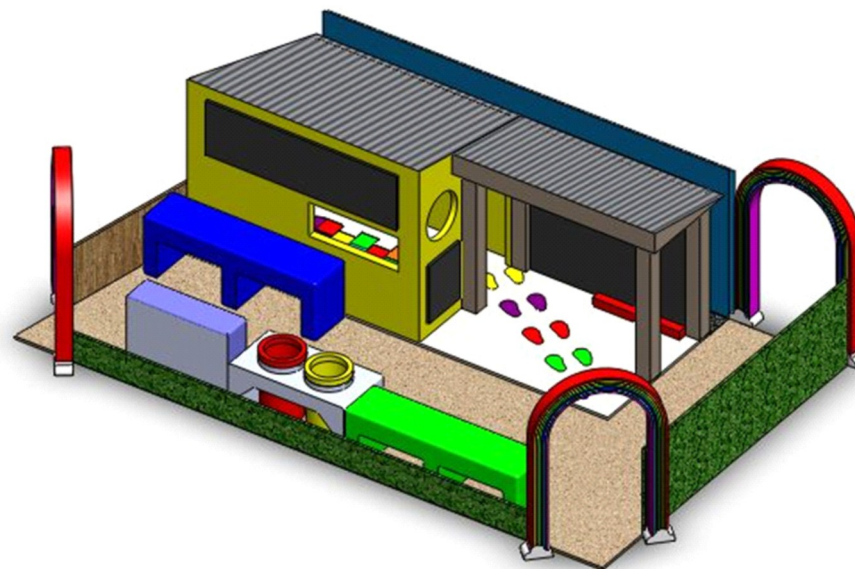
## RECOMMENDATIONS

### OVERALL EMTHONJENI PROGRAMME

The recommendations below are taken from the *Emthonjeni Proposal* which we prepared for the VPUU and

Sikhula Sonke. This proposal, which can be viewed on our website, discusses in detail all necessary components of the Emthonjeni Outreach Programme. Within this document, our group makes several recommendations:

- ◆ The creation of a network between all proposed Emthonjeni sites within the redevelopment plan from the VPUU.
- ◆ Within the proposed network, each site is designed to fit together with the surrounding sights to create one coherent network. Each outreach component as well as the equipment in each site fit together to provide well-rounded set of physical and educational activities to the children of Monwabisi Park.
- ◆ Our Emthonjeni ideas are a starting point for other contributors to consider and expand upon.
- ◆ Each Emthonjeni site should address all areas of development.
- ◆ These Emthonjeni sites are not designed as a replacement to ECD centres, but as a complement to all ECD centres.
- ◆ A survey should be conducted to determine the amount of funding currently going towards ECD in Monwabisi Park.
- ◆ A financial model should be developed from the funding analysis that we began.
- ◆ Monitoring and Evaluation must be completed in a manner which evaluates the effectiveness and impact of the programme while fostering community ownership pride in the development of each child as well as the entire programme.



### PILOT EMTHONJENI SITE DESIGN

Our group was tasked to design one specific Emthonjeni site. This pilot site is located around a tap in C Section of Monwabisi Park and is featured in the VPUU's ISUP.



The *Emthonjeni Proposal* outlines several designs that we have produced for this pilot site. Our recommendations for this particular site are as follows.

- ◆ The immediate neighbours of this site must be consulted as to the design of the Emthonjeni. This is to ensure usage and ownership over the site from within the community.
- ◆ We recommend that the pilot site contains at least the following components: archways, benches, community clothesline, chalkboard and shade. A more detailed list of suggested elements is provided in our proposal.
- ◆ Each site should contain an improved tap, drainage, and a wash basin to decrease children's exposure to contaminated water.



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