



CENTRE FOR
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN AFRICA



**Our Future
Reimagined**

SYMPOSIUM Investing in the Early School Years

DATE: 11 June 2024 09h00 – 16h00 & 12 June 2024 0900 – 14h00 (lunch will be included)

LOCATION: Ground floor Auditorium

ADDRESS: UJ JBS Park, 69 Kingsway Avenue, Auckland Park, Johannesburg

You are invited to a symposium titled *Investing in the early school years: lessons from a community of practice for strengthening school-based care and support services*.

This two-day event will be hosted by Distinguished Professor and the former Research Chair in Welfare and Social Development, Prof Leila Patel; the South African National Research Foundation Chair in Education and Care in Childhood, Prof Jace Pillay and the South African Research Chair in Integrated Studies of Learning, Language, Mathematics and Science in the Primary School, Prof Elizabeth Henning, University of Johannesburg. Cohosts of the event are the Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg and the Centre for Excellence in Human and Community Development, University of the Witwatersrand. The symposium marks the conclusion of a four-year study, supported by the National Research Foundation, to strengthen school-family and community based social systems for foundation phase learners.

The CoP is a demonstration programme to strengthen investments and interventions to break cycles of disadvantage that impair lifelong learning, growth and development in later life. The CoP team presents this work, developed, and implemented in real life settings in five urban and one rural school, as an innovative exemplar of multidisciplinary practice. It identifies strategies and policies required to strengthen learning and child wellbeing outcomes in schools in disadvantaged communities with high rates of poverty, malnutrition, exposure to violence, and with poor health, learning and psychosocial wellbeing outcomes. Valuable lessons were learnt about the potential to scale up and institutionalise the CoP in more schools in Gauteng and beyond.



Findings will be shared by the Community of Practice (CoP) made up of a multidisciplinary team of researchers, social service practitioners, civil society organisations, international development agencies and public sector specialists, planners and decision makers in education, health, and social development.

The symposium will feature the following findings and lessons learnt:

- How well children and their families fared over the duration of the study.
- How children are faring in a rural setting in Moutse, Limpopo.
- Lessons learnt from the development and implementation of a digital application to assess child wellbeing in several domains.
- Learning from the implementation of school-based support services delivered by social workers, teachers, primary health care nurses and education psychologists.
- Lessons learnt from the use of a digital application in the assessment of children and intervention to improve child and family wellbeing outcomes.
- Learning from mathematics and language assessments of the children and the delivery of teacher interventions to improve performance in the early grades.
- Lessons learnt from the CoP on how to scale up and institutionalise school-based support services.

Objectives of Symposium:

- To advocate for early investments in health, education, and psychosocial development, emphasising their crucial role in child wellbeing and societal progress
- To synthesise insights from the CoP study for Child Wellbeing
- To assess the viability and potential of a community of practice for strengthening school-based support services
- To share practical insights and lessons learned from the CoP study, aimed at scaling up interventions to improve child wellbeing outcomes
- To provide recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders to enhance children's growth and development during their early years of schooling.

CoP partners will deliver presentations sharing insights from the CoP study, while opportunities will be provided for engagements on specific topics.

The target audience for the symposium includes:

1. CoP Project Partners and Collaborators: CoP partners, including researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who have contributed to the project.
2. Practitioners: Professionals working directly with children and families in various capacities, such as educators, social workers, and healthcare providers.
3. Policy Makers: Government officials, and decision-makers/policymakers, including those from DoH, DBE, GDE, DSD, responsible for developing and implementing policies related to child welfare, education, health, and social services.
4. Researchers: Academics and researchers with an interest in child development, social systems strengthening, and interdisciplinary approaches to improving child wellbeing outcomes.

DAY 1

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
09:00 – 09:15	Registration and coffee	Thembeke Somtseu (UJ)
09:15 – 09:30	Opening and Welcome	Prof Jace Pillay (South African Research Chair: Education and Care in Childhood, UJ)
09:30 – 10:35	Session 1: The CoP Study: Making the Case for Investments in the Foundation Years	Prof Leila Patel (Distinguished Professor, UJ) Feedback from the Manamela/Makhathini Family
10:35 – 10:50	TEA	
10:50 – 12:00	Session 2: Roundtable School-Based Support Services: A Review of Policies	Chair: Prof Jace Pillay (SARCHI Chair, UJ) Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dr Wanga Zemba-Mkabile (Specialist Scientist, SAMRC) (Online) ■ Prof Nompumelelo Ntshingila (Ass Prof, Dept of Nursing, UJ) (recording) ■ Dr Rubina Setlhare (Lecturer, Dept of Educational Psychology, UWC) (Online) Discussant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Joseph Moleme (Education Psychologist, GDoE) ■ Audrey Mawae (Chief Physiotherapist, Ekurhuleni Health District, GDoH)
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch	
13:00 – 14:00	Session 3: Elevating Educational Outcomes	Chair: Prof Leila Patel (Distinguished Professor, UJ) Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prof Elizabeth Henning (South African Research Chair: Integrated Studies of Learning Language, Science and Mathematics, UJ) ■ Prof Jace Pillay (SARCHI Chair, UJ) ■ Julia Tsogobidane (HoD Foundation Phase, Lejoeleputso Primary, Meadowlands) ■ Q&A
14:00 – 15:00	Session 4: Child Health	Chair: Dr Khutala Mabetha (CoE, Wits) Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dr Lukhanyo Nyati (Senior Lecturer, UWC) ■ Ms Matshidiso Sello (Researcher, CSDA, UJ) Discussant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dr Victoria Tintswalo Nesengani (Lecturer, Faculty of Health Sciences, UP) ■ Colleen Mokoka (Clinical dietician, Philadelphia hospital, Limpopo)

15:00 – 16:00	Session 5: Digital monitoring for Child Wellbeing	Chair: Arnesh Telukdarie (Professor of Digital business and Research Chair, UJ) Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lauren Graham (Director CSDA, UJ) ■ Jace Pillay (SARCHI Chair) Discussant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Makiba Yamano (Chief: Child Protection, UNICEF-SA) ■ Gift Mmolotsane (Assistant Director, Monitoring & Evaluation Unit, DSD)
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DAY 2

Time	Session	Speakers
09:00 – 10:15	Session 1: Roundtable Plenary Session Strategies to Strengthen School-based support teams.	Chair: Lauren Graham (Director, CSDA) Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prof Elizabeth Henning (SARCHI Chair, UJ) ■ Tania Sani (Project Coordinator, CSDA, UJ) ■ Panel discussion with CoP Partners ■ Dr. Kemoneilwe Momi Metsing (Chief Education Specialist, GDoE) ■ Marousi Mzondi (Deputy Director: Youth and Integrated School Health Programme, GDoH) ■ Sandra Madella (Social Work Manager: School Social Work and CTIP, GDSD) ■ Morongwa Magongoa (Chief Community Development Officer, Ndlovu Care Group)
10:15 – 10:30	Tea	
10:30 – 11:45	Session 2: Panel discussion – Strategies for Scaling Up	Chair: Makiba Yamano (UNICEF-SA) Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aislinn Delany (in-person)/Helene Perold (online) (Consultants), with Prof Leila Patel Discussants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Anthony Meyers (Director Learner Psycho-Social Services, GDoE) ■ Makgapo Eric Mahlo (Educationalist - Save The Children) ■ Daphne Naidoo (Acting Director: Child Care and Protection Services, GDSD) ■ Marousi Mzondi (Deputy Director: Youth and Integrated School Health Programme, GDoH) ■ Likho Bottoman (Director: Social Cohesion and Equity in Education, DBE)
11:45 – 13:00	Way Forward: Advancing Schools Based Support for Child Wellbeing	Chair: Prof Lauren Graham <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prof Katja Joronen (Professor Nursing Science, University of Turku, Finland) ■ Prof Elizabeth Henning (SARCHI Chair, UJ) ■ Prof Leila Patel (Distinguished Professor, UJ) ■ Q&A
13:00 – 13:15	Summary and closure	Prof Elizabeth Henning (SARCHI Chair)
13:15	Lunch	