



PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

**RIVERLEA COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMME:
IMPROVING THE GENERAL WELLNESS OF A
COMMUNITY AT RISK**

**FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
JANUARY 2020**

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The Future
Reimagined

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Health Environment and Development (HEAD) study in Riverlea identified a broad spectrum of health concerns and risks in the low-cost housing community. The Riverlea Outreach Project is a collaborative intervention programme by the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Riverlea Development Trust (RDT) and the City of Johannesburg (CoJ). The Riverlea Outreach Project enhances and promotes general wellness within the Riverlea community through targeted intervention of health services in Environmental health, Podiatry, Optometry, Medical and Radiation Sciences (MIRS) – specifically antenatal ultrasound scans, Sports and Movement Studies and Nursing including midwifery and community health, not including university recess periods when students are on holiday.

Primarily it is focused on promoting wellness in the Riverlea community, and the programme also facilitates work integrated learning for UJ health science students and research.

To maintain this lifechanging intervention programme, we are reaching out to organisations to assist with funding so we can further bolster the Riverlea Community Outreach Project.

RIVERLEA, A COMMUNITY AT RISK

Many households continue to live in unhealthy conditions such as low-cost housing or informal settlements. Riverlea is one such low-cost housing development west of Johannesburg, constructed in the early 1960s with a current population of approximately 33 000 people. This community is currently the closest residential area to Soccer City. There are two large mine dumps situated on either side of the community, posing a myriad of health risks to the community members.

In a collaborative effort between the Medical Research Council (MRC), The University of Johannesburg (UJ), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the City of Johannesburg (CoJ), a Health Environment and Development (HEAD) study was conducted over five years. The study was conducted in Hillbrow, Bertrams, Riverlea, Braamfischerville and Hospital Hill. In the most impoverished communities, the study also revealed concerns about mental ill-health symptoms, as well as growing food insecurity and hunger.

According to the results of the HEAD study, Riverlea has a wide range of social, environmental and health problems. Compared to the remaining four sites in the survey, Riverlea residents were found to have high levels of chronic illness such as asthma, diabetes and hypertension due to the high levels of smoking.

Alcohol and drug abuse, drug peddling, and glue sniffing as well as problems such as rodent infestations, illegal dumping and depression and anxiety were prevalent in this disadvantaged urban community.

OUTREACH PROJECT TO ADDRESS GENERAL HEALTH IN RIVERLEA

The Riverlea Community Outreach Project was undertaken as a collaborative intervention by UJ, the MRC, the Riverlea Development Trust (RDT) and the CoJ.

The Riverlea Project was officially launched on 28 April 2010 and incorporated the services of the UJ's Departments of Environmental Health, Podiatry and Optometry. The project was initiated with a weekly Optometry and Podiatry Clinic within the community, as well as the implementation of an environmental health education programme in conjunction with the Environmental Health Department of CoJ. Since then, three more departments, MIRS (Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences), Nursing, and Sport and Movement Studies, have come on board.

Effectively responding to the health issues revealed by the HEAD study will require an ongoing, long-term, cross-sectorial plan of action that is rooted in a strategy to eliminate poverty and joblessness.

The UJ Faculty of Health Sciences considered multiple motivations for the activation of a social outreach project of this nature.

- **Sustainable social change:** UJ aims to provide a viable and sustainable service and to create holistic support to produce a long-term impact by addressing the specific health needs identified in the Riverlea Community.
- **Practical student experience:** The project facilitates work-integrated learning (WIL) requirements of UJ Health Sciences students.
- **Curriculum development:** It allows UJ to create new short learning programmes (SLP).
- **Staff training:** It engenders continual professional development (CPD).
- **Partnering with local government:** The Environmental Health Department of UJ coordinates activities with the CoJ Health Department as a joint venture.
- **Ongoing research:** The project contributes to the research objectives of the University through the creation of new research opportunities.

There are various aspects to a project of this nature, which involve changing community practices, fostering networks, educating stakeholders, promoting community education and strengthening individual knowledge and skills.

The broader vision of the Riverlea Community Outreach Project is to enhance and promote general wellness within the Riverlea community. The following particular areas of concern are concentrated on:

- Hypertension, diabetes, obesity and food insecurity;
- Maternal and child health care;
- Prevention and control of locally endemic diseases;
- Appropriate treatment of common diseases and injuries;
- Promotion of food supply and proper nutrition;
- Education concerning prevailing health problems and methods of preventing and controlling them; and
- Training focusing on health disciplines.

Over 25 000 people, including members of the community and UJ students, have benefitted from this project from 2010 to 2019.

Some services offered by the different departments are in the Riverlea Primary Health Care Clinic of the CoJ, with the exception of Optometry, which, due to a lack of space in the Riverlea Primary Health Clinic, is offered in the Riverlea Community Centre, adjacent to the clinic. Environmental Health works in the community, as does the Department of Sport and Movement Studies.

Environmental Health

The UJ Environmental Health Department has been involved since the inception of the project in 2010. The focus of the Riverlea Community Engagement Project is prevention, promotion, community participation, advocacy (community awareness), and development. It is complementary to the COJ Department of Environmental Health. Some of the activities undertaken include practical health interventions, such as education and demonstration of handwashing and nail care. This initiative positions the Department to engage with the community on environmental health aspects.

Impact

From 2010 to 2017 a total number of 1 088 households and 5 440 individuals were reached by the HEAD project. The World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Urban Health concluded the HEAD study in 2017. Activities up to 2019 included:

- Issuing new dish cloths in exchange for an old ones;
- Issuing vegetable seeds to households to encourage people to plant their own gardens;
- Issuing rat traps and demonstrating how to use them;
- World Food Day celebrations took place at the Riverlea Primary School on 16 October 2018;
- The clean-up of a council stand, educating people on recycling and proper waste management, and starting a vertical garden at an old age home in 2019.

Optometry

Optometric services by UJ was introduced to the community in 2010. Services include visual screening, full optometric consultation and professional advice on the provision of appropriate frames and lenses, contact lenses and other optical aids. This professional service aims to optimise visual function.



Since the project commenced in 2010, the Optometry department had sent approximately six students, under clinical supervision, to Riverlea on Wednesday afternoons to consult patients. They conduct a full optometric evaluation and examination. The need to introduce a second clinic was identified earlier in 2014 and one additional clinic per month was introduced focusing on children.

Impact

Since 2010 more than 3250 patients benefited from the optometry service. The majority of members in the Riverlea community attending the clinic cannot afford to purchase spectacles. About 70% to 80% of patients attending the clinic need spectacles to correct their vision. Examinations are free of charge and spectacles are provided at a significantly subsidised rate.

In many cases, it has been life-changing, e.g. a primary schoolboy was said to be “stupid” and put in the back of the class and ignored. He was examined and found to require spectacles to correct his vision. Since then he has excelled at school.

Podiatry

Podiatrists assess and manage foot and related lower-limb conditions and provides a comprehensive range of services, including:

- Foot and lower-limb assessment;
- Treatment of lesions of the skin and nail, including corns, calluses, and nail problems;
- Treatment of infections (e.g. plantar warts);
- Nail surgery;
- Foot care and footwear education;
- Biomechanical assessment;
- Diabetic foot screening;
- Foot wound management;
- Assessment and management of the at-risk foot due to systemic pathology;
- Insole and orthosis manufacture.

Since the project commenced in 2010, the Podiatry Department has sent students to Riverlea on Thursday mornings to conduct full podiatric examinations on patients. Close to 3800 patients have been seen by podiatrists at Riverlea since 2010.

Impact

The majority of members in the Riverlea community attending the clinic cannot afford to consult a podiatrist and purchase inner soles or orthotics if indicated. Examinations are free of charge, and inner soles or orthotics are supplied at cost price or no cost. Many patients receive professional attention and advice, which they would never have had if it had not been for this service provided. Critical is the care of diabetic patients.

Sport and Movement Studies



The Department became involved in the project in 2011. An Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme was developed. Learners between the ages of 4 and 6 participate in a 10- week specific gross motor movement programme to identify any problems. Educators/teachers receive training to help them assess children's gross motor skills. Mini sports day coaching commenced at schools in 2015. In 2015 and 2017, the format of the sports day was changed with all the crèches participating together at a UJ sports field.

The "Adopt-a-Crèche" project was introduced in 2013 with second-year students working with a third-year student (as the group leader) for each crèche. The UJ students and school principals determine the needs of the school or crèche, e.g. painting of jungle gyms, providing stationery, playing with the children and planting trees.

The ECD programme and "Adopt a Crèche" project were not conducted during 2019 due to various logistical factors, such as transport of students to and from Riverlea, the feasibility of this transport, crèches being unable to facilitate students and time allocations, as there was a disruption in the routine of the kids.

Impact

- If community circumstances permit, Sports and Movement Studies will again commence with the ECD programme and "Adopt a Crèche" project in 2020. This will identify any motor skills early in a child's development, which can be attended to timeously;
- Training of educators/teachers will enable them to identify any gross motor skills for many years after their training;
- UJ students gain appropriate practical experience in their field of study;
- The general health and wellbeing of the community are enhanced.

Medical and Radiation Sciences (MIRS)

Antenatal ultrasound examinations (scans) had not been primarily done at Riverlea Clinic, and previously patients were usually referred to the Rahima Moosa Hospital, but only during the second trimester of pregnancy, and then only if there was a complication with the pregnancy.

The objective of the service is to date a pregnancy in the first trimester and to identify any abnormalities with the pregnancy or foetus during the second trimester of pregnancy. The Obstetrics and the Paediatric Departments of the Rahima Moosa Hospital support the initiative. The Department commenced screenings in June 2013 and is currently hosting one clinic per week. Over 1900 patients were screened since its inception.

Impact

- Enhancing maternal, foetal and infant health and outcomes;
- UJ students gain appropriate practical experience in their field of study, and the general health and wellbeing of the community are enhanced;
- Research projects can also originate in this community.

Some of the comments and feedback from patients who had antenatal ultrasounds were so positive and appreciative. Here are some of the comments:

"The service was cool. I'm happy about the work. I can see my baby playing and healthy."

"I am very much impressed and satisfied with the detailed sonar done and all the explanations and advice."

“My experience with the ultrasound was good. The nurses/doctors were very calm and explained everything to me. These scans help us as moms to feel and see what happens in our tummies.”

Nursing

The services offered by the Nursing Department of UJ are complementary to the nursing service already offered at the CoJ Riverlea Clinic.

Second- and fourth-year Community Health nursing students, as well as third-year Midwifery students, are placed at the clinic for training. Since 2015 more than 6000 patients benefited from this service.

Impact

- The workload of the CoJ Riverlea nursing staff is alleviated;
- UJ students gain appropriate practical experience in their field of study;
- The general health and wellbeing of the community are enhanced;
- Research projects could also originate from this community project.

Financials

Funding for the continuation of the project in 2020 would rely on external funding/donations. The patients treated all received free consultations, while glasses and orthotics are provided at no or cost price.

The bulk of the operational costs, which is in the region of R 580 000.00, are used to pay for the clinical supervision of the students and medical consumables, to ensure adherence to clinical standards of operations. However, there are substantial operational costs that the University cannot cover alone. We invite interested partners to engage with us on ways in which you can get involved in this innovative social change project.

Reporting and Governance

Full feedback reports will be generated in accordance with the requirements of the funder, which reports on the activities, the numbers of patients, students and staff who benefited from the project, a full financial report with explanations of expenditures, objectives and significant challenges experienced during a financing period, and also the monitoring and evaluation of targets set for the project.

The **Riverlea Community Outreach Project Committee** convenes twice per annum, during which operational issues are discussed, and decisions regarding the project are made. The committee comprises Dr PA Els of UJ (Chairperson), who manages the overall project, members of all the UJ academic departments concerned with the project, and members of the Nursing and Environmental Health departments of the City of Johannesburg.

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES BACKGROUND

The University of Johannesburg's (UJ's) Faculty of Health Sciences is an essential training institution addressing the national health concerns of the country. Through the programmes offered by the Faculty of Health Sciences, emerging health service practitioners are equipped to provide crucial skills within the national health care framework.

UJ's Faculty of Health Sciences, one of seven faculties at UJ, provides quality training in the disciplines of Nursing, Emergency Medical Care, MIRS (Radiography), Optometry, Podiatric Medicine, Biokinetics, Chiropractic, Biomedical Technology, Environmental Health, Complementary Medicine as well as Sport and Movement Studies.

The Faculty is recognised nationally and internationally for the provision of quality programmes traditionally associated with the Health Professions Council of South Africa, South African Nursing Council and the Allied Health Professions Council.

With a focus on producing competent and innovative practitioners, the Faculty provides an engaging learning experience within the context of problem-based learning with real-life experiences in clinics. Our Health Training Centre is an active learning hub where we consult patients in various clinical

disciplines. This practical teaching and learning component ensure that our graduates are sensitive to and understand the broader health care needs of society. During the training of the students/interns, they consult patients in both the UJ campus-based clinics and satellite clinics. Various disciplines have selected clinics off campus, some at hospitals but also in communities where the need exists for such services. A total of 398 652 patients were consulted from 2004 to October 2019. Further, more than 2 000 people per annum have health screenings performed by students.

Placements in relevant service-rendering facilities that are accredited by the University and relevant regulatory bodies further enhances the work-ready focus. On completion of their studies, our students have a high placement ratio in their respective service domains.

The Faculty is also the first health services training centre in South Africa to develop a pioneering Clinical Simulation Training Facility, primarily for the Nursing, Biomedical Technology, Emergency Medical Care and MIRS disciplines, but also available for other disciplines and regular professional development activities.

In line with the University strategic endeavours, the Faculty drives sustainable and relevant community development projects. Various programmes are involved in sustainable social investment, and community outreach programmes and our programme in Riverlea is one example where we have already made an impact on and difference to the community by way of an innovative, integrated and multidisciplinary approach.

CONCLUSION

For us to improve the wellbeing of our communities, we need to take hands with prolific industry partners. A partner in health is a partner in saving lives.

An investment in this programme will make an unsurmountable difference to lives of those in Riverlea.