



MANDELA DAY

2023 REPORT

Compiled by the Engagement Office

“Now, more than ever, humanity needs to confront climate change, persistent and increasing levels of poverty, as well as inequality. For Nelson Mandela International Day 2023, it is the vision of the Nelson Mandela Foundation for the world to unite and act decisively against the consequences of climate change and food insecurity. **#ItIsInYourHands**”

Blurb from the Mandela Day 2023 website



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INTRODUCTION



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR CHIKE AGBAKOBA

Image: Interns in the Engagement Office getting ready for everyone to arrive at Mandela Day 2024.

INTRODUCTION

On the 18th of July 2023, Nelson Mandela University celebrated Mandela Day with two special events seeking to honour the legacy of our namesake through initiating new collaborative projects working towards bringing about meaningful change.

In Helenvale, Gqeberha, Mandela University came together with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Community Chest, and the community of Helenvale, at the Gelvandale High School Hostel. The Food Systems Programme¹ (located within the University's Engagement Office) had been working towards establishing a collaborative partnership seeking solutions to the escalating woes faced by the Hostel and the children who live there. Mandela Day provided an opportunity to boost our collaborative work and invite the support and input of broader stakeholder-communities.

The plan for the day included activities ranging from gardening, groundskeeping, and cleaning and revitalising the boys' and girls' dormitories. Although initially imagined as a quieter event than what we hosted in 2022, as the day drew nearer, more and more staff and students requested to be part of it, and A Tangible Africa offered to host a coding workshop for kids from the hostel as well as from surrounding schools. With addresses by senior Mandela University leaders, including our Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Sibongile Muthwa, the Director of Engagement, Dr Bruce Damons, and Deans of Faculties, and supported by more than 120 volunteers, the day turned into something we could not have imagined!

There were clinic and counselling services offered for attendees and community members, speeches made to inspire and to commit to sustaining the project, poetry shared by young local poets, lots of gardening work initiated, cleaning of dormitories, clearing of bushes and picking up of rubbish. In addition, a high-level analysis of the space was undertaken by Architecture lecturers, and ideas shared for new ways in which the space could be used. The day culminated with song and dance performances by schoolkids and an impromptu dance-off which included international students who had joined us for the day along with youngsters from the hostel school and community.

The day served as a catalytic moment, bringing together key partners committed to working together over the medium- to long-term to bring the vision of a "hostel of hope" to life.

Later the same day, the team from the Gender Engagement Hub within the HoC hosted a different kind of event aimed at students based on the University's Summerstrand campuses and in residences nearby. This came about in response to calls for expanding our response as a university (and society) to the scourge of gender-based violence.

¹ The production, distribution, availability and politics of food is a key marker of systemically-anchored inequalities, and it came as no surprise that 'food' re/emerged as a major thematic in 2021 through the Covid-19 pandemic; central to people's daily struggle for dignified and sustainable livelihoods and income. The Food Systems Programme was established to address this issue and found a home within the Hubs of Convergence and the Engagement Office.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2022 was the first year that Mandela University partnered with the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) to co-host Nelson Mandela International Day. Our events in the Eastern Cape formed the focus for the Foundation and consisted of Transect Walk Dialogues (TWDs) held across more than six geographical communities under the theme: **“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”**

In 2023, the NMF’s theme for Nelson Mandela International Day was **“Climate, Food & Solidarity”**, and the call to action, **“It is in your hands”**. A summary of the theme follows:

This year, the Mandela Day and Outreach programme wishes to reignite the global reach of Nelson Mandela International Day through global partnerships that will host tree planting and the capacitation of home-based and community food gardens around the world. On Nelson Mandela Day 2023, it is the vision of the Nelson Mandela Foundation for the world to unite and decisively act against the intersection of climate change and food insecurity by establishing or working in community and home-based food gardens as well as planting trees as the sun moves from New Zealand in the east, to the furthest-most reaches of the west.

Following our fruitful partnership in 2022, and the many lessons that came with it, both Mandela University and the NMF were committed to working together on Mandela Day again, aiming to extend and deepen our collaboration. As we neared the time for planning for Mandela Day 2023 to commence, a particular collaborative possibility had emerged within the Engagement Office that was ready to be concretised and initiated, namely with the Gelvandale High School Hostel, which we ultimately agreed should be our site for Mandela Day 2023.

Gelvandale High School, located in Helenvale in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha, faces numerous challenges in trying to maintain their hostel in a dignified

and sustainable manner. The area is severely under-resourced and marginalised and faces extreme levels of crime and poverty – a situation which has earned Helenvale the label of being one of the most dangerous areas of the city for many years now. As such, selecting this site for Mandela Day 2023 allowed us to highlight the interlinked issues of poverty and crime faced by our communities. Furthermore, earlier in the year, the hostel started a food garden it was hoping to expand in beginning to address food insecurity, tying in well with the NMF’s envisioned theme for 2023.

As our conversations with the Hostel progressed throughout the year, we brought in other organisations interested in coming together to co-construct solutions; the primary organisation being the Community Chest, along with community organisation Likusasa Lomama, who were leading the cultivation of the food garden on the site.

One of the most glaring needs faced by the Hostel - and which all parties wanted to address early on - was the severely dilapidated infrastructure. The poor state of the kitchen, the dormitories, and the bathroom facilities in particular, had a significant impact on the ability of the hostel staff to provide a safe and nurturing environment for learners. As these needs crystalised in the lead-up to Mandela Day, we envisioned a day on which the members of the Engagement Office would volunteer their time to do as much cleaning and beautifying of the grounds as possible. This vision was expanded as the news of our plans was shared amongst the University community, and we added health and counseling services, stimulating activities for the learners, and plotting out of new possibilities for the Hostel to our vision.

It is important to note that 18 July 2023 was envisioned as a catalytic moment for this partnership, which will continue over the long-term as we collaboratively explore sustainable, meaningful solutions to the problems faced by this Hostel and the community in which it is located, well beyond Mandela Day².

² Highlighting the challenge of we want this report to be collaborative, and the tension of deadlines and capacity.

BEYOND

GELVANDALE HIGH SCHOOL HOSTEL

While Gelvandale High School Hostel was the main local site for International Mandela Day 2023, there were a number of other activities linking to the NMF that were taking place globally. In addition, the University hosted another gathering on campus on the same day, where staff and students could come together to reflect on a tragic crime that took place on our George campus and what the university community could do to respond and to try to prevent this from happening again.

The tragic event referred to is the murder of Mandela University student, Zimkhitha Ntshisela, whose life was brought to an abrupt, violent end on our George Campus. Ntshisela's tragic death stirred up a significant response from staff and students at the university, leading to a number of discussions and meetings attempting to make sense of and process the event. At an engagement session facilitated by the Engagement and Transformation offices, representatives of the

DVC portfolios and faculties had an opportunity to reflect on how the death of Zimkhitha impacted them on a personal and a collective level, noting that Zimkhitha represented not only students but also the aspirations of her family, community and communities more broadly in socially marginalised areas of our country, continent and the globe. The consensus was that this should galvanise us into collective action in order to respond to increased mental health challenges and gender-based violence.

Our event on Mandela Day brought together various staff members and students, to co-construct the possibilities for establishing a "wellness space" on our campuses that will assist us to provide comfort and support for the human beings studying and working on our campuses are to assist us all to respond more holistically to mental health, gender-based violence and other related challenges.

Live Stream with The Hope Revolution Vision Partners

Several sites on the African continent were identified in partnership with the Hope Revolution Vision, our University's collaborating partner in Hub One of the Hubs of Convergence. Hub One - Individual and Collective Wellness – houses a pilot project with this partner that is centered on co-constructing a community-based substance abuse programme. As part of our activities on 18 July 2023, we connected virtually with several sites where the Hope Revolution works across the continent, and those sites marked their contribution to International Mandela Day and their commitment to the theme by either planting a tree or starting a food garden.

In the lead-up to Mandela Day, the Centre for Community Technologies (CCT) compiled a video of the various sites across the African continent, sharing their work, dreams and aspirations. The video was aired at the Gelvandale High School Hostel on the day and can be viewed here.



BEFORE THE DAY

While there were numerous conversations and consultations that came before this, 29 May 2023 saw our first 'official' meeting as a broader collective, bringing together voices from Mandela University, Nelson Mandela Foundation, Community Chest and Likusasa Lomama. Here, we met with the learners and staff of Gelvandale High School Hostel to ask them the question:

"What do you want this hostel to look like?"

Together, everyone around the table shared their vision and pieced together a concept for what would later become known as the 'hostel of hope'. As we did so, it was noted that many of the concerns around the revitalization of the hostel were linked to the community in which it is located, and so it was decided that the next step would be to have a consultation meeting with the community itself.

On 10 July 2023, we hosted a Community Consultation Meeting with a two-fold purpose: to 1) share with the community the developing ideas and vision for the 'hostel of hope' and hear feedback and contributions to expand this vision together with the broader community, and 2) establish a steering committee consisting of members from each of the stakeholder-communities who will meet to develop more deeply the medium-to-long term program of action.



View the programme here.

During this engagement, participants were divided into smaller groups and invited to share what made them excited about the hostel of hope, and thereafter to take stock of commitments that had been made, as well as what immediate needs should be prioritised. Ideas that found resonance related to issues of safety and security, as well as to the need for maintenance work, and for a space that could support students battling the lure of narcotics.

When asked to share any last words, one group said: "Ons werk!" -two words that capture the desire to make a significant change, but also acknowledging the scale of effort that is going to be required. Considering the alarming state of disrepair and absence of safety facing the Hostel, it is no exaggeration to say that this is a mammoth task. However, participants also flagged the need for unity around this, signaling that, though it might be mammoth, it is achievable with collective effort.

This session ended with the co-construction of a programme for what the 18 July might look like, mindful of course that it would be the catalytic moment for what all present agreed would be a long walk towards seeing these aspirations through to fruition.



ON THE DAY



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR CHIKE AGBAKOBA

ON THE DAY

Mandela Day 2023 combined a large turn-out, quite a bit of hard work, and a fair share of fun.

A variety of volunteers joined us for the day, from a large group of international students to teams of staff and students from various faculties, departments, and units within the university. In addition, we had Engagement Office stakeholders, partners such as Community Chest, various community leaders and volunteers, and the principal of Gelvandale High School along with staff and some of the learners.

Once all the attendees had made their way to the Hostel's main hall, they were welcomed by Dr Bruce Damons, Director of Engagement, who expanded on the role that universities have to play in "advance[ing] all of our understanding of contemporary issues that have an impact on daily life," and finding solutions to the challenges impacting upon communities with whom the university shares geographical space, arguing that "the means through which we develop information that is helpful to society – that is socially useful - is to increase community involvement with the university."

Thereafter followed an address by Mandela University's Vice Chancellor, Professor Sibongile Muthwa, emphasising the significance of Nelson Mandela Day, especially as this date marked 10 years since the world icon passed away, stating that this day "provides a chance for everyone to appreciate their personal capacity to improve the world." Prof Muthwa also reminded attendees of the significance of their coming together for a common purpose, encouraging us that "through our collaboration, we can further the causes that Mandela believed in, such as the struggle against injustice, aiding the less fortunate, and fostering reconciliation."

Attendees were treated to further words of inspiration and encouragement from the NMF, Community Chest, FamHealth, the School Principal and Hostel Matron, and from the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Deans of Faculties at Nelson Mandela University.

Hostel Matron, Toinette Abrahams encouraged the university "keep up its efforts to react to and influence schools and demonstrate that education not only benefits the student but also their parents, siblings, and entire community when it is available." Calling on all attendees to acknowledge the spirit of Madiba in ourselves as we set about with our tasks, Matron Toinette challenged us all to "embody Mandela's teachings and serve as an example of how his legacy may endure throughout Africa."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR CHIKE AGBAKOBA

Before the audience dispersed to the various stations for activities, we were graced with a number of poetry readings by the Helenvale Poets, some of whom were students at the school, and whose words both shook, inspired and moved us. Their reflective poems touched on a variety of issues concerning the world today: injustice, lack of peace, criminality, and what it means to honour the legacy of Madiba.

Following this, attendees moved around the property to find an activity they could contribute towards. They had been requested to bring along a variety of cleaning supplies and materials they might need, and so the work got underway with sweeping and scrubbing, picking up litter and clearing overgrown areas of the property. We got to meet one another and make new connections while working together to make a visible difference to the hostel space on this special day.

Students and staff from various departments offered services to community members in attendance, including psychosocial education and counselling from our Social Development Professions, and advocacy on gender-based violence and issues affecting the LGBTQi community from our Transformation Office. Attendees also had an opportunity meet South African Police Service staff and learn about their work and goals for the area, as well as to have their blood pressure and blood sugar tested by Pharmacy students, supported by Dr Jeff Govender of FamHealth.

As the day drew to a close, learners performed song and dance items to the delight of their fellow learners and the students in attendance, and we even witnessed our international exchange students participating in a dance-off with our local students and learners!

Based on the feedback from participants, we can say that people across the board remain inspired by Nelson Mandela's legacy - by his bravery, tenacity, and commitment to reconciliation. Students are motivated by his battle against injustice to oppose prejudice and work towards a society where everyone is treated with respect and decency. Mandela's life shows us that we can build a more promising and just future for everyone if we are determined and work together.



View the Tik-Tok video here.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR CHIKE AGBAKOBA

The following article, written by **Daily Maverick** journalist Estelle Ellis, also captures the day well:

Private sector joins hands to fix Nelson Mandela Bay's 'horror hostel'

The 112 teenagers boarding at the Gelvandale High School hostel have been living without running water, lights, sufficient bedding and adequate study facilities. A cold wind blows through bullet holes left by a gang fight and part of the hostel had to be shut down after gangsters began using it as a hideout.

On Tuesday morning, for the first time in years, learners boarding at the Gelvandale High School hostel in Nelson Mandela Bay took a warm shower.

When matron Toinette Abrahams got up at 4.30am on Tuesday, she heard the children in the hostel singing. There are 52 boys and 60 girls living there.

Most days, they call their parents and beg to be taken elsewhere.

"Parents come to fetch their children on a daily basis because the children can't cope," Abrahams said. But on Tuesday morning, as dawn broke on Mandela Day 2023, the children were celebrating.

"When I got there, they were singing and dancing. It was awesome just to see them not struggle for some water," she said.

The hostel is in an area riddled with gangs and deemed so dangerous that police were deployed to guard the perimeter while a Mandela Day event was under way.

"Load shedding is the worst nightmare for us. Inside and outside, it is pitch dark. They must go into their rooms because they can't go outside," she said.

Abrahams has been working at the hostel for 27 years, 12 of those as the acting matron.

"To me, this project is the light at the end of the tunnel," she said.

"The Community Chest came to us like angels. Since the first day that they came, there has really been a change."

The hostel's bathrooms, however, remain in a horrendous state. The urinals do not work. The baths have no working plumbing and the sinks are blocked. There are exposed electrical connections everywhere and no lights in the children's rooms.

The wind blows through bullet holes left in the hostel's windows after a gang fight. Half the hostel buildings had to be locked up as gangs were using it as a hideout and assaulting children there.

"I wouldn't allow a street child to live the way my children have to live," Abrahams said.

"It is not appropriate for children. It is heartbreaking to see children trying to find water to wash in the mornings. They also don't have anything to keep themselves warm. They can't study in their rooms because there are no chairs. There is only a bed for them to sleep on and the mattresses are finished. The windows are broken. The roof is full of holes. Rain comes in."

Abrahams said she was sceptical when first approached about the renovation project because others had offered to help in the past, but pulled out when they saw the state of the hostel.

"Many people came to see the hostel and never returned. But with Nelson Mandela University, it was different. They first said we must share our vision for the hostel. They never promised us anything. They asked us how we feel about our future. They gave us hope and a way forward. Only two days after they came, there was action."

The university, Community Chest and the Nelson Mandela Foundation have joined forces to fix the hostel. Some businesses were also there to support the Mandela Day event by helping to clean up the hostel grounds and provide lunch.

The Community Chest, a nonprofit organisation, is supporting the establishment of a food garden and is training volunteers to care for it.

The school was hit with a R2-million water bill after pipes were stolen and buildings flooded. There are no cleaners.

"We will make it a reality."

She said it was important to her that the children had warm water after returning from the holidays.

Geswint Abdoll said the first phase of the project had almost been completed and the second phase – involving work on the buildings – would begin soon.

Vukani Nzobe from the Nelson Mandela Foundation said the world needed more hope. *"For me, hope means working together,"* he said.

Dr Jeff Govender, an activist and medical doctor from FamHealth who has worked in the area for decades and is also a sponsor of the project, said everyone was lamenting the dysfunctionality in South Africa.

"This country can be world-class," he said, *"But something is wrong."*

He said he believed good leadership to be the solution.

"My challenge to the university is to go deeper and wider and empower communities to take ownership."

He said the community should treat the project with gratitude.

"Look after it, grow it and make it better." DM

This article originally appeared on the Daily Maverick website [here](#).





PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR CHIKE AGBAKOBA

Students from the Department of Social Development Professions shared their experiences of the day in reflective assignments submitted as part of their modules. For example, Matamela Lidovho, said of the day, *"Mandela Day at Gelvandale High School Hostel was fruitful [and the partnering organisations] were able to make the living condition for students at the hostel bearable. They were able to bring back the hot water which was pivotal to students as it was the winter season."*

Malefane Masentle said that attendees *"felt united on that day...like their prayers were answered and they were exposed to new things and people from other countries"*.

Some students shared their visions for what this Hostel of Hope could be. Sphumelele Julia suggested we should work towards *"Creating a Safe Haven of Trust, Empowerment and providing Guidance."*

Sinabo Ngejane summarised her vision as: *"Empowering Minds, Nurturing Futures"*

And Sesihle Cwibi shared some encouragement that, *"when working together, there is little to nothing that cannot be moved."*

POETRY POETRY POETRY
POETRY POETRY POETRY



The involvement of the **Helenvale Poets** was one of the highlights of the day. These are children, youth and adults living in this community who come together every week at Helenvale Primary School to read and write poetry, mentored by published poets such as co-founder Brian Walter and participant-turned-mentor and published poet, Leonie Williams. As a group they “work on the writing process, from free writing to publication and reading, assisting writers to develop writing and editing skills, and to find their own voice.” Established in 2012, the Helenvale Poets have published seven full-length books, the proceeds of which are ploughed back into the project. The group have also done local readings, have appeared at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda and have attended the McGregor Poetry Festival in the Western Cape.

The poems shared on Mandela Day capture the kinds of subject matter which the Helenvale Poets as a group process and articulate through their work. They paint a sobering picture of the daily realities faced by this community: a reminder to the various participants who had joined us on the day of the severity – and urgency – of what it is we are trying to change.

The Helenvale Poets are facilitated by the Bay Creative Writing Development Project, a Project of Southern Africa Development, Research and Training (SADRAT) Institute.

POETRY POETRY POETRY
POETRY POETRY POETRY

Kos in ons kombuis C

1.

By Caleb Devin Tee, 9, Alpha Primêre Skool

My ma se kos
is die heerlikste
kos in die hele wêreld –

as ek dit reuk kry
dan maak my mag brrrrr.

Sy hou van groente, en as ek nie
wil my groente eet nie dan sê sy dis gesond vir my liggaam.

Danger is all around us

2.

By Chesnay Goodman, 12, Alpha Primary School

Nowadays
our lives are in danger.

We can't even walk around
because we don't know when it's going to shoot.

The parents don't want to send children to the shops –
that's how scared they are.

Gangsters shoot at each other.
They don't care if they shoot the innocent because they
are heartless.

We don't even want to look at their eyes, that's how
scared we are.

The shooting becomes a daily thing for them. we can't
say anything.
We just see someone lying there, dead,
full of blood,

and all we can do is cry
and say goodbye.

So we pray.
We remember Mandela, and we pray for the future.



3.

Passing days

By Allesha Hoffman, 13, Hillcrest Primary School

Days...
fill my heart
with warmth and love,
but at the same time
they make our lives miserable with hate and
coldness.

The empty days
despise the happy children playing in the
streets.

Gangsters...
kill innocent human beings,
knowing about their families suffering but not
pitying them.

The broken streets
are hurting and killing our happiness, as the
passing days go on.

We long for Nelson Mandela,
for his spirit to bring joy and happiness back to
his children.

4.

Community

By Tatum McCarthy, 11, Alpha Primary School

Mandela fought for our rights, but now that
Mandela is gone everything has changed.

He fought for our freedom but now we must
just sit back and watch how gangsters take our
freedom away.

The gangsters do not care about people.

They take small children to join their gangs,

without thinking twice
about putting a child's life in danger

Children are scared to go
to the corner of Kobus Road because they don't
want to get shot.

We want our freedom back,
and we want someone like Nelson Mandela
who could make our freedom grow.

5.

Hopeful freedom

*By Latifah Moesha Hoffman, 18. Member of
Helenvale Poets for 7 years*

Indulging yourselves, indulging
your time with robbing us of our freedom, a
freedom that was not so easy to get.
A freedom Nelson Mandela fought for, spend-
ing 27 long years in jail.

Now, you kill our innocents, making our two-
way street
a no-go street,
shooting left, right and center.

You could have made our community safer, for
children to enjoy their childhood,
to give back their youth,
their freedom and laughter.

They could play freely with no hustling. But now
the children are so anxious
to see who and where someone was shot.

We are longing for a youthful freedom so that
we can enjoy our lives peacefully and freely,

like in Madiba's dream.



Nature

6.

By Patronella Basson, 17, Gelvandale High School

On Mandela Day, for Food Security: it's in our hands

Where she should be wearing flowers

she is ragged at dump sites,

with her thorny reputation:
when people think about her heart gangsters are their first
thought.

When a clean page has one mistake, nothing else is noticed;
here, graffiti is not art
but a bullet that robs us of lives:

blood runs in these streets,
like the drains that waste clean water.

Tonight, I will follow my star hidden behind the clouds, bright as
the new day that waits.

Stilte

7.

By Chesnay Goodman, 12, Alpha Primary School

Dis in ons hande

'n Voëltjie kom sit op my leë tak, geniet die stilte
en die agtergrondmusiek, terwyl dit die brander ry

van die wind,
terwyl die son agtermiddag sak.

Nog een gewilde dag
in die strate van Helenvale,
terwyl ek geniet hoe alles in plek val met die inspirasie
van my hart
wat die oog van stilte voel en vang.





AFTER THE DAY

05 AUGUST 2024

As the 18 July drew to a close and the last of the participants packed up, we agreed that it is now that “the real work begins”. Although the ‘day of’ may involve much flurry and festivity, the work of clarifying challenges and developing co-constructed solutions can take time.

However, we were able to bring together a number of collaborating partners within two weeks of Mandela Day, at a workshop where we began the process of co-constructing our next steps towards bringing the Hostel of Hope to life.

Dr Damons kicked off the workshop asking everyone to introduce themselves along with sharing a value that someone important in their life taught them. He then took the audience through a process of refining these into a set of values that would guide us in our work on the Hostel of Hope:

1

Hard work

2

Gratitude

3

Laughter in pain

4

Consistency

5

Perseverance

6

“Druk terug”

7

“Finding a yes”

8

Excellence

9

Respect

10

Being present

11

Generosity

12

Support

13

Servant leadership

14

Humility

AFTER THE DAY



AFTER THE DAY

Participants were reminded that there is no silver bullet solution for the myriad complexities we are seeking to address in this endeavor, therefore, it is important to approach this work from a learning position, as we seek to co-construct a way forward. Echoed in the values established by the participants listed above, the project will also be guided by the Engagement Office's three principles:

Principle of Convergence

The conscious effort of drawing together internal and external stakeholders to unlock the knowledge and praxis that will allow us to meet our aspirations.

Principle of Reciprocal Solidarity

The practice of authentically exchanging knowledge and resources through the principles of generosity, solidarity, co-creation, responsiveness, and inclusion to the mutual benefit of all.

Principle of Multiple Purposeful Forms of Output

Progress is best derived from an authentic learning process with others in practice; embracing the uncertainty of not knowing and supporting multiple forms of knowledge output to drive and social inclusion and cohesion.

REFLECTIONS

ON MANDELA DAY 2023

After the check-in exercise, participants were randomly divided into four groups to discuss the following questions and decide on one collective response:



WAY FORWARD

FOR THE HOSTEL OF HOPE

After unpacking the various responses, each group was asked to respond to a third question, ***“What do you want to do?”***

The vision for a Hostel of Hope was summed up as follows:

“The Hostel of Hope is a physical space in Gelvandale where we strive to create an environment of love, with security both internally and externally to allow the “hostelites” and community to flourish.”

This vision includes:

Clean, safe dormitories where “hostelites” can study and rest;

A hostel ground that is a hive of activity, not a graveyard;

A state-of-the-art IT space;

Food production in an educational form, not just a garden;

A labyrinth for all to enjoy;

Rejuvenation of buildings so that we bring a sense of dignity back to those who occupy them;

Enough nutritious food served daily to enable students to thrive; and,

A space owned – and defended – by the community.

In pursuing this vision, it is important to remember that:

- We cannot take responsibility for issues that are the duty of government. The hostel repairs, for example, must be the responsibility of the Department of Education.

In light of this vision, participants were tasked with identifying the assets currently available that could be used to achieve it.



DRAFT REPORT:

CURRENT BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs Riëtte Kotzé, a lecturer in the Department of Architecture at Mandela University, was asked to present a Draft Report that she compiled on the current built infrastructure of the Hostel. The purpose of the report was as follows:

To gain a high-level understanding of the current state of the built infrastructure. A photographic survey was conducted, and the findings may serve as a point of departure in creating a roadmap for repairs and maintenance of the facilities. The survey has been conducted on appearances through an architectural lens and further investigation is needed by involving other built environment professionals which includes (but is not limited to) project managers, architects, landscape architects, civil engineers, structural engineers, electrical engineers, wet services engineers as well as building contractors.

Participants were introduced to some of the challenges that would need to be addressed first, before the majority of the work could be done. However, they were able to brainstorm around some short-term solutions that could be achieved, particularly in relation to restoring dignity to the learners and volunteers who occupy the buildings.

COORDINATING

COMMITTEE

Participants agreed that there would be two structures involved in this project. The first would be everyone who was present at the day's workshop. The second would be a smaller coordinating committee, mandated to drive the project forward, and comprised of representatives from the Gelvandale High School's SGB, the Gelvandale High School Hostel, various departments involved from Nelson Mandela University, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Community Chest, and the community of Helenvale and Gelvandale that surround the school and hostel.



The full Draft Report can be viewed here.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In attempting to capture both the substance and spirit of Mandela Day 2023, this report has touched on a variety of the contributions made by the many people who joined us on the day – the learners and teachers from Gelvandale High School, students and staff members from so many different departments across Nelson Mandela University; the organisations who work tirelessly to bring about positive change in so many marginalized communities across our Metro; the community members hoping to realise their dreams of peace, safety and opportunity in their area; and the staff and the resident learners of Gelvandale High Hostel who have worked for so many years with almost no support and still kept alive their hope for being part of a better future for the space and for the community within which it resides.

Our decision to host International Nelson Mandela Day 2023 at this venue, and to open it up to all who would like to join us, resulted in an event that surpassed our expectations. It enhanced an awareness of the power we hold as citizens to work together to build the world we want to live in, and demonstrated how imaginary barriers that separate us can dissolve when we engage in shared activities for the benefit of all.

The event and its aftermath also resulted in a number of important lessons, the foremost of which revolves around the capacity we have available for sustaining such a collaborative project over the long term. The variety of contributions generated towards this project on the day speak to a significant investment of time and skill that offer an exciting impetus to kicking off such a project. However, the longer-term work involves careful coordination in order to sustain forward motion without overwhelming any of the collaborating partners.

As this report is finalized - in early February of 2024 - we in the Engagement Office have not had the capacity as yet to host the coordinating committee again. This speaks to the need for an honest appraisal of the limitations all collaborating partners face - in this and all such project teams - and for the planning of future engagements to carefully balance the capacity within the group with the aspirations we hold for our work together.

THANK YOU

for viewing the ***Mandela Day 2023 Report***