

The Harry Crossley Children's
Nursing Development Unit

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

BUILDING CHILDREN'S NURSING
IN AFRICA FOR AFRICA



THE HARRY CROSSLEY
Children's Nursing
Development Unit



Executive summary

Persistent shortages of specialised paediatric nurses continue to challenge health systems across Africa, yet the [Harry Crossley Children's Nursing Development Unit](#) (CNDU) trained more nurses in 2025 than ever before.

This year also saw the launch of two new projects that strengthened our training and scholarship portfolio.

The first was a project conducted in partnership with the Children's Hospital Trust that [strengthened paediatric burn care](#) in the Cape Winelands East sub-district, 120 km from Cape Town. It involved facility upgrades and new equipment, our Unit contribution was the development of an online burns course aligned with best practice and delivery of on-site training to 177 local healthcare workers. 36 nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals completed the online training.

Our second initiative, a [Best Practice Project](#), brought together 14 nurse educators from nine nursing schools across six African countries. Over the course of one year, participants engaged in leadership-focused learning designed to strengthen both teaching and clinical practice.

Our [online short course suite expanded](#). We now offer six accredited *Essentials of Nursing Children* courses (four of which are offered twice a year). A seventh, focused on paediatric clinical assessment, was developed this year ready for launch in 2026. Since 2022, a total of 418 participants from 129 institutions in 16 African countries have completed the online *Essentials of Nursing Children* course. The low attrition rate of 7% is enabled by flexible online learning.

Our accredited *PhD Preparation* short course was also significantly updated in 2025 to include a GenAI component, with 20 participants completing the course.

Our small team continues to excel, delivering nine [presentations at local and international conferences](#).

We also welcomed two experienced clinician-academics, Faatima Ebrahim and Alexia Joachim, who have already made substantial contributions to our activities.

In 2025, our work received [notable international recognition](#), including an invitation to deliver the opening keynote at the International Family Nursing Association Conference in Perth, Australia, where our Afrocentric models of family-centred care were warmly received. Professor Coetzee was also invited to Brazzaville, Congo, to review the World Health Organisation (WHO) Prototype Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Curricula ahead of their November 2025 publication. These invitations acknowledged Professor Coetzee's extensive experience and leadership in regional curriculum development, and opened discussions about the Unit becoming a WHO Collaborating Centre.

Written by Prof. Minette Coetzee, Director of The Harry Crossley Children's Development Unit

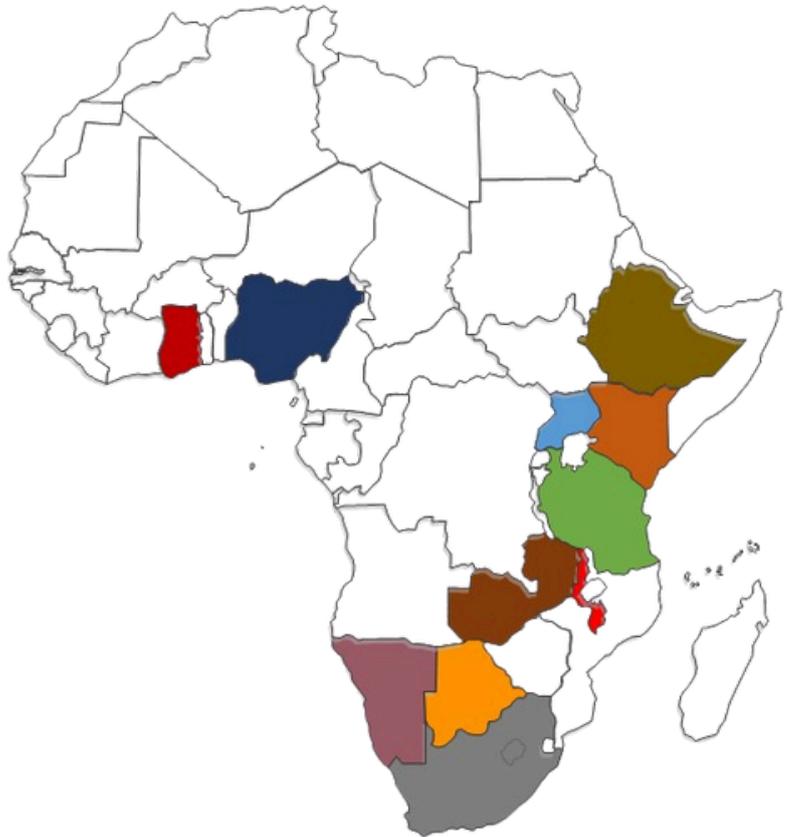


About us

The Harry Crossley Children's Nursing Development Unit is a nurse-led teaching and scholarship unit in the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Cape Town.

Why do we exist?

To build capacity in children's nursing in Africa, supporting nurses, educators, and leaders as they strive for the best outcomes for children through contextually appropriate, evidence-based practice, and with a commitment to unapologetic African nursing excellence.



How do we do it?

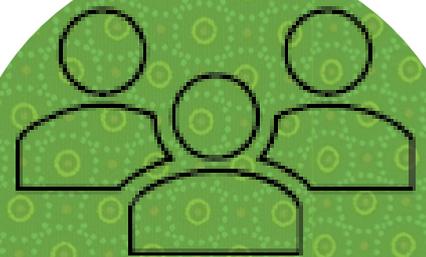
We sustain and build a programme of work focused around three pillars of activity:



Teaching and training nurses working with children



Supporting educators and institutions as they build sustainable contextually appropriate high quality educational training programmes



Working with children's nursing leaders and teams to articulate and establish best practice in local and regional clinical facilities and services

Teaching and training

Masters of Nursing in Children's Nursing

Five nurses from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Kenya, Zambia and South Africa successfully completed the first year of the *Master of Nursing in Children's Nursing* programme. Clinical Leadership and Research courses complemented the Advanced Nursing Practice course learning both in classrooms and at the bedside with clinicians, children and their families.

Students also spent time honing their teaching skills with students registered for a Postgraduate Diploma in UCT Division of Nursing and Midwifery and advancing their thinking about the role of an Advanced Clinical Nurse in their own country's health system.

2025 Masters students

5

Completed 1st year

All-time Graduates

28

Advanced Practice Nurses



PhD Programme

The Unit is delighted to celebrate the graduation of Dr Beatrix Callard whose thesis looked at the recording and reporting of perinatal mortality in the maternity departments of the Khomas region, Namibia. Dr Callard has walked an extensive road with the Unit as the first PhD graduate to have completed three postgraduate programmes offered in the Unit: a Postgraduate Diploma in Critical Care Children's Nursing (2012), a Master of Nursing in Child Nursing (2018), and a PhD.



2025

1

PhD graduate

2

Ongoing PhDs

All-time

3

Graduates

2025

20

Completed PhD Preparedness course

All-time

63

Completed PhD Preparedness course

"Worth every minute I have committed to it. It was a very well curated and supported course, and I have a bigger picture view of the PhD process with a lot of helpful things in my toolbox - the module on GenAI is a must!"

PhD Prep course participant

2025

Essentials of Nursing Children Short Courses

Unit-led design and development of new courses continued this year, and in June resulted in the launch of the *Essentials of Paediatric Burns Care* course. Initially offered as part of the larger 'Strengthening Paediatric Burns Care' project, 23 nurses and 8 other healthcare professionals, working in the Cape Winelands East sub-district completed over the first two intakes. It will be offered Africa-wide from 2026, alongside other courses including the inaugural *Essentials of a Paediatric Clinical Assessment* course.

The reach of these online courses continues to be considerable, often providing children's nursing training to nurses for the first time.



2025

150

Participants

10

Intakes

59

Institutions

12

African countries

All-time

419

Participants

29

Intakes

129

Institutions

16

African countries



"I really enjoyed the short course. I feel more empowered and looking forward to sharing and implementing all that has been learnt to provide safe quality care to the most vulnerable patients"

Essentials of Nursing Children course participant

Supporting educators and institutions

Children's Nursing Educators Forum

Members of the *Children's Nursing Educators Forum* span from 10 countries across the continent. The Forum, again fully online in 2025, provided nursing educators with an opportunity to learn about academic debriefing, engage in robust discussion around role of artificial intelligence in education and consider what it means to be a community of practice in education.



2025

4

Forums held

53

Members

33

Institutions

10

Countries

Children's Nursing Training Observatory

Children's nursing training data, gathered from Children's Nursing Educators Forum members, was again this year collated to reflect the status of children's nursing training in the region. This was then used to produce a country-level dashboard and the fourth Children's Nursing Training Report.

The dashboard provides specific details of current and historical programmes in the region, alongside data visualisations presenting the trends in training activity at country and institution level, graduate numbers and educator capacity.



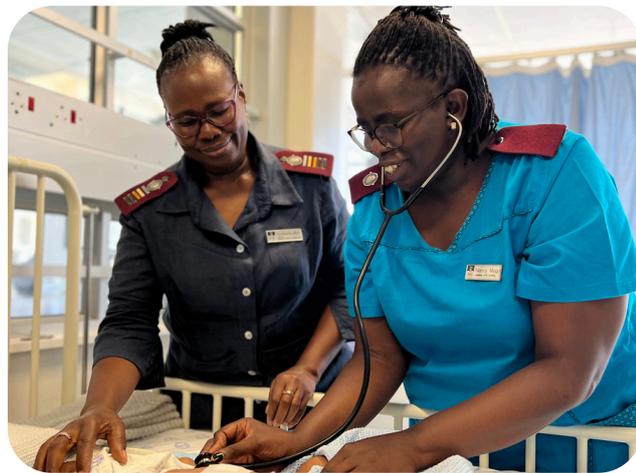
All-time

4

Reports written

Best Practice Project 2.0

This year we launched a new *Best Practice Project*, this time focusing on building children's nursing educator's leadership capacity. Structured using a fully online course, participants explored their own strengths and leadership competencies, assessed in-country nursing education contexts; and then considered processes of change and available tools to guide students in initiating and support local and best practice.



"It has been an amazing period of learning and mentorship. It empowered me as a child nurse educator and has strengthened networking."

Best Practice Project participant

BPP 2.0

20

Participants

13

Institutions

8

Countries

World Health Organisation Curricula

The WHO Regional Office invited Prof. Minette Coetzee to Brazzaville, Congo and acknowledged her valuable expertise and participation in validation of the Competency-based Curriculum for Paediatric and Child Health nurses, one of 11 WHO prototype curricula published in November 2025. The opportunity opened valuable conversations and collaboration with the WHO office of Health Workforce Education and Training.

1

Curricula reviewed



Working with childrens nursing leaders and teams

Strengthening Burns Care

The Unit continued to collaborate with the Children's Hospital Trust and colleagues from Chelsea & Westminster NHS Trust (UK) on the 'Strengthening Paediatric Burns Care' project. Through the design and delivery of a multi-element training programme healthcare workers in the Cape Winelands East sub-district have been upskilled in the care of children who have been burnt. Outcomes of this work were presented at the 2025 South Africa Burn Society Conference.

98%

Reported improved knowledge, skills & confidence

211

Healthcare workers trained

from
7

health disciplines

in
3

hospitals & primary care settings

Clinical Internships

As part of the burns project, five two-week internships were hosted for seven nurses and two occupational therapists from Worcester Hospital and a Primary Health Clinic. This was in addition to hosting of two pairs of Oncology interns from Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, Ghana & Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre, Tanzania. A key strength of their experience was being able to join a doctor from their unit, also currently at RCWMCH completing paediatric oncology sub-specialist training. This allowed them to collaboratively reflect on and compare practices between the two settings. Two Critical Care Nurses from Mediclinic also spent a week in the PICU at RCWMCH gaining experience in the management of a ventilated child.

2025

15

Clinical internships

All-time

41

Clinical internships



4

Oncology interns



9

Burns Interns



2

Critical Care Interns

Online Journal Club

With material being fully online, CNDU journal clubs increase the access of children’s nurses working in clinical settings to journal articles describing the most recent evidence-base relevant to the local context. They facilitate application to local practice and can be used individually or with a group of colleagues.

2025

10

Journal Clubs Published on YouTube

All-time

39

Journal Clubs Published

Conference Presentations and Accolades

Four staff members and one Masters alumni presented at eight conferences this year. This included the opening keynote presentations at two international conferences by Prof. Coetzee. The presentation at the 17th International Family Nurses Association Conference, in Perth, Australia was a particularly well-deserved honour and celebration of the African-led innovation shaping children’s nursing. The conference theme was ‘Promoting Family Strengths Globally in Challenging Times’.

Ilana Webber co-chaired the first ever nursing workshop at the International Paediatric Nephrology Association Conference and Clare Davis was given the 2025 Emerging Researcher Award at the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences Education Conference.



9

Conference Presentations at 3 International & 5 National Conferences

2

Keynote presentations

Publications

Our publications are fully open access and the posters created by our Masters students, summarising Evidence Based Practice Guidelines, are all available online (UCT’s ZivaHub).

1

Peer reviewed paper

1

Workforce observatory report

3

Evidence-based practice guidelines

For more information

Prof Minette Coetsee,
Director
minette.coetsee@uct.ac.za

Jane Vos,
Programme Manager
jane.vos@uct.ac.za

The Harry Crossley Children's
Nursing Development Unit,
Department of Paediatrics and Child
Health, University of Cape Town,
Red Cross War Memorial Children's
Hospital,
Cape Town, South Africa



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