



DRAKENSTEIN CHILD HEALTH STUDY UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

04 July 2025

UCT Partnership with Paarl Community Builds R1 Million Multipurpose Sports Field for Local School

Opening Ceremony:

25 July 2025 | 12:30–14:00 | Langabuya Primary School, Mbekweni, Paarl | [GPRS](#)

The Drakenstein Child Health Study (DCHS), a brainchild of the University of Cape Town's (UCT) [Department of Paediatrics and Child Health](#), will officially open a R1 million multipurpose sports field at Langabuya Primary School in Mbekweni, Paarl, on Friday 25 July 2025.

The DCHS is a unique African birth cohort study, investigating the early life determinants of health from birth through adolescence in a low-middle income country context through innovative translational research. The study follows mother-child pairs from pregnancy through adolescence with comprehensive health measures and repeated sophisticated testing, to identify the burden of illness, drivers of health and long-term impact of exposures.

This has evolved to become a world leading study for understanding developmental trajectories of health or disease and identifying new areas to optimise health through the life course in Africa.

Professor Heather Zar, Chair Department of Paediatrics & Child Health, Director SA-MRC unit on Child & Adolescent Health and principal investigator DCHS, said "The Drakenstein Child Health study has been working together with the community in Mbekweni for more than a decade to better understand the determinants of child health and strategies to strengthen child and maternal health.

"We've undertaken several community engagement activities with the community and school. The school identified the creation of a multipurpose playing field as their key priority around 10 years ago. We are pleased that this has now become a reality. This has transformed the dusty playground into a wonderful space for the more than 1000 learners to enjoy soccer and other sports, and to share special times together during and after school," she said.

"Funding for this came from several funding streams that were sourced by the PI of the Drakenstein Child Health study over the last 10 years. It cost approximately R1 million to build the facility – so it has taken us 10 years to do this," Professor Zar said.

She said construction began early in 2025 and was completed by May 2025.

The multipurpose sportsfield is part of the DCHS Langabuya Primary School Development Project, an ongoing project to improve facilities, strengthen support and learning in partnership with the school staff, pupils and governing body. The sports facility will serve more than 1530 children who currently attend the school.

The DCHS, led by Professor Zar, provides a platform for cross-disciplinary research encompassing:

- Health from birth through adolescence
- Determinants of health: infectious, nutritional, environmental, immunologic, genetic & maternal factors through the life course
- Underlying mechanisms of disease development

Many of the DCHS participants attend Langabuya primary school in Mbekweni, and a strong partnership has been forged with the study and the school. In July 2018, the DCHS together with other partners established a school library, as this was a key need identified by the school.

The library has promoted literacy, allowed learners to share books at home and enjoy the joy of reading. The library continues to function well, serving learners, their families and teachers. During COVID, the study undertook educational and poverty alleviation projects.

Subsequently, the study has partnered with the school to paint classrooms and brightly coloured murals and to further provide training to upskill teachers in areas of need. Amongst other needs, the school identified the lack of sports facilities, especially a soccer field as a priority for the school to nurture the dreams of learners who are passionate and talented in sports.

As a poorly resourced former model C school that serves a low socioeconomic population, the infrastructure and resources have been very limited. Learners, with an evident great love for soccer and other sports, played on a single dusty and muddy field.

Contributions to the school or soccer field opening ceremony are very welcome and are tax deductible. We have established a specific account, held at UCT for donations as below:

Account name:	UCT Donations
Bank Name:	Standard Bank of South Africa Bank
Account number:	071 522387
Reference:	231164 and your name/donating organization's name

Members of the media wishing to attend the event are requested to [RSVP](#) before 20 July.

Ends.

Issued by: UCT Drakenstein Health Study Team

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Before



After