



# BAQONDE – Learn in your language

RAYLENE CAPTAIN HASTHIBEEER

UKZN is collaborating with universities in South Africa and Europe to develop the “Boosting the use of African Languages in Higher Education: A Qualified Organised Nationwide Development Strategy for South Africa (BAQONDE) Project”, which was established to provide an effective response to one of South Africa’s national priorities: the development of African languages in higher education.

UKZN is involved in the project through the University Language Planning and Development Office (ULPDO) under the stewardship of Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Professor Sandile Songca.

Songca said the project is important because it “enables students to reach their potential through access to learning (in) African languages. The majority of learners do not receive education in their home language(s). Research has underlined the extremely negative impact that this can have on students’ performance throughout the education system.”

BAQONDE seeks to establish an inter-institutional network of African

Language Development Units (ALDU) to optimise training strategies, co-ordinate the production of materials, and harmonise teaching standards for multilingual teaching in higher education, among other goals.

Songca is confident that BAQONDE, which commences next semester, will enhance the use of isiZulu as part of the implementation of the university’s Language Policy. “Lecturers will be trained to use isiZulu for teaching and learning, followed by the development of teaching and learning material in an African language for the benefit of the country,” he said.

Acting Director of the ULPDO, Dr Lolie Makhubu-Badenhorst, is part of UKZN’s BAQONDE team, along with Dean and Head of the School of Arts, Professor Nobuhle Hlongwa and senior lecturer, Dr Gugu Mazibuko.

Makhubu-Badenhorst is pleased at the inroads the project is making to facilitate and promote the use of indigenous African languages as a medium of instruction in tertiary education. “The collaborative network of ALDUs plays a fundamental role in training lecturers in innovative



The UKZN BAQONDE team (from left): Acting Director of the University Language Planning and Development Office, Dr Lolie Makhubu-Badenhorst; Dean and Head of the School of Arts, Professor Nobuhle Hlongwa; and senior lecturer, Dr Gugu Mazibuko. Photograph: Supplied

and multilingual methodologies and co-ordinating the development of materials, both for teachers and students, to be able to teach and learn multilingually. The various partici-

pants will foster the implementation of top-down nationwide strategies to guarantee more inclusive and legitimate access to higher education in South Africa,” she said.

Songca thanked all involved in the genesis and realisation of the project and noted that BAQONDE will solve challenges experienced in the past. “The commendable vision of the

national education authorities, at basic and higher education levels, to address this problem by encouraging the development and use of African languages as a medium of education has intermittently been set back by concerns of staffing, training and infrastructure, among others.”

The institutions involved include UKZN, North-West University, the University of the Western Cape, Rhodes University and three European universities: Trinity College Dublin, the University of Groningen and the University of Salamanca.

The BAQONDE project team members are Pedro Alvarez Mosquera (University of Salamanca), Lolie Makhubu-Badenhorst (UKZN), Johan Blaauw (North-West University), Dion Nkomo (Rhodes University), Aurelie Joubert (University of Groningen), Lorna Carson (Trinity College Dublin) and Basse Antia (University of the Western Cape). At UKZN, Makhubu-Badenhorst works with Hlongwa and Mazibuko.

Visit the website at <https://baqonde.usa.es/> for more information on the project, or see UKZN’s ULPDO website at <http://ulpdo.ukzn.ac.za/HomePage.aspx>.

## Gender-based violence exhibit at Durban City Hall

MELISSA MUNGROO

A CAMPAIGN titled “They Stand Their Ground Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV)” has culminated in an exhibit at the Durban City Hall funded by the National Arts Council.

UKZN’s Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS) within the School of Applied Human Sciences, partnered with Art A Resource for Reconciliation Over the World, South Africa (ARROWSA) to organise the campaign and exhibit.

The exhibit, which promotes individuals standing their ground against gender-based violence, includes models of people named Deli and Thanaka made from recycled materials. The models were created by the youth from ARROWSA Bechet with banners made by South Roots International and Maggi Squire of Indra Congress.

This project involved youth from South Africa, India and the United Kingdom taking a stand against GBV, with input from young women such as Ayanda Ngobo of the Durban Local History Museum and CCMS Master’s student Luyanda Makoba-Hadebe.

In light of Pride Month, Thanaka was also created to represent the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) community.

The exhibition is interactive and allows visitors to attach words of support to Deli (who represents the domestic space) and Thanaka. It also coincides with National Youth Month, during which youth are encouraged to come up with creative and innovative ways of improving their skills, and communicating their views, stance, vision and leadership.

CCMS honorary lecturer and ARROWSA Chair, Dr Mary Lange said: “This project grew far beyond our expectations, starting a chain of similar installations across the globe with our partners. We are in talks with one of our UK partners, Touchstones Rochdale about a version of this installation going to the UK later in the year.

“We believe we need to stand together as a community to chip away at the devastating daily numbers of gender-based violence victims. This is a community-driven stand, and this



The gender-based violence exhibit. Photograph: FJ Lange

community knows no culture and no borders.”

Mohau Qalaza of the Durban Local History Museum said: “What particularly impressed me about this campaign is the inclusion of the youth, who painstakingly molded and bought Thanaka and Deli into the striking and beautiful personas they are. Their message against GBV including LGBTQ+ is clear and strong, and it is refreshing to hear their views regarding unfortunate acts against humanity.”

ARROWSA Bechet co-ordinator, Bheki Dlamini commented: “Boys and men are also being abused and, of course, that is the topic that communities don’t touch or are not very vocal about. I suppose it is also because society has dictated that men should be strong, that men don’t cry. So, we wanted to bring out that there are men from the LGBTQ+ community who go through this abuse. It was important to acknowledge that we see you, we stand with you and we support you.”

ARROWSA Bechet participant, Casey Spinner said: “Seeing it here in the City Hall, I am trying hard not to scream. It is so good to see that our work paid off and that it has been placed in such a big place - and I am glad we took up the challenge.”

## UKZN and The Ocean Cleanup partner to tackle Umgeni River plastic pollution

SALLY FROST

UKZN has teamed up with The Ocean Cleanup – a Dutch non-profit organisation that is developing advanced technologies to rid the oceans of plastic – to investigate the mechanisms of plastic pollution in the Umgeni River and its transportation through all seasons.

The project will span three years (2021 to 2024), mapping plastic pollution hotspots and fluxes in the river and along the Indian Ocean coastline.

“This is a project about mapping, trapping, collecting, processing, testing, modelling and engaging,” said South African Research Chair (SARChI) for Waste and Climate Change, Professor Cristina Trois, who is the lead investigator on the project along with colleague, Dr Thomas Mani from The Ocean Cleanup.

“How many plastic items have you used today already? Are you possibly using one just now? The answers are very likely ‘many’ and ‘yes,’” said Mani.

Trois said that this was not surprising, considering plastic’s roaring success across global markets since the 1950s. Today, more than 400 million tons of plastic products are purchased every year worldwide.

Trois said that while these materials have brought many benefits to the modern world - for example in sterile medical products, and lightweight automotive and aviation components - at the end of their use, plastics pose a vast environmental problem. “Of the total of more than eight billion tons of plastics produced to date, a staggering 80% have already ended up in landfills or the environment. Once lost, plastics will fragment into smaller pieces, microplastics (less than 5mm), and pose a threat to ingesting organisms.”

Rivers are believed to be major pathways for plastic waste on land to reach the oceans. A new global modelling study indicates that 0.8 to 2.7 million tons of plastics are transported towards the oceans each year, with small urban rivers among the most polluted. According to this study, five major streams in the Durban area alone may carry as much as 1 340 tons towards the Indian Ocean. Among these is the



beautiful, but plastic infested Umgeni River (an estimated 380 tons per year).

Mani said that the anthropogenic and environmental mechanics which drive this riverine plastic transport are still largely a mystery. “For this reason, empirical physical evidence is needed to support the current model data. When and how do plastics spill into the Umgeni? How fast and how far will they be flushed downstream? How much and when will the plastics reach the river mouth and the Indian Ocean? What happens after these drink bottles, shopping bags and lunch-boxes reach the ocean?”

These are some of the main questions that Trois, her team of researchers and Mani, Lead River Field Scientist in the research department at The Ocean Cleanup seek to answer.

“Driven by the belief that one needs to understand a problem to be able to truly solve it, The Ocean Cleanup pursues a strong research emphasis in line with its mission to rid the world’s oceans of plastic by deploying mechanical clean-up devices in the offshore ocean as well as in rivers,” said Mani.

With the use of satellite imagery, airplanes and drones, river cameras, floating GPS trackers, “litter-boom” waste characterisation, underwater sampling and beach litter characterisation, this research partnership seeks new insights into the seasonal dynamics of plastic waste transport through the Umgeni River system and aims to provide a replicable model for cities in the West Indian Ocean (WIO) region.

To kick-off this exciting research

Plastic pollution in Umgeni River. Photograph: Supplied

voyage, a workshop was held for stakeholders including UKZN, The Ocean Cleanup, the National Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) through the Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Waste Roadmap, eThekweni Municipality, The Bateleurs, Durban Green Corridors, and Sustainable Seas Trust (SEAS).

A team from The Ocean Cleanup, including Mani, joined UKZN researchers for the initial mapping flight over the Umgeni River catchment with a light airplane provided by The Bateleurs, a non-profit group of volunteer pilots who avail their aircraft for conservation causes.