

The Ma'at Institute



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The COVID-19 Psychosocial Internship Project (CPIP), located at UKZN Ma'at Institute, emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Formerly known as Afrikology Unit - a multidisciplinary team that supported Community Based Work with Children and Youth on the African continent.

The Ma'at Institute, was established within the College of Humanities - SAHS - to provide multidisciplinary human and social interventions that are embedded in the African world view, philosophy, values and belief systems. The Health and Welfare Seta signed a memorandum of understanding with UKZN on 04 August 2020 and UKZN signed the MOU in August 2020. The project inception and planning commenced in May 2020. The recruitment and selection of interns took place in June, and the appointment of interns was concluded in July 2020.

9.1 Purpose, Vision, Mission and Values

The Purpose of the Ma'at Institute is to advance Afrocentric thought, and, the Vision, to Live Ubuntu through the way of Ma'at.

The Mission, is to be a centre of excellence in the studying and promoting of African Interests, Knowledge Systems, Experiences & Culture in our Psychosocial Services.

The Ma'at Institute works together with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the Fuze Institute, the Forum for African Psychology, and the KZN Social Cluster. Collaboratively, these the entities share the following values:

- 'Heart as light as a feather';
- Respect for life;

- Communal personhood;
- Holism;
- Harmony and balance;
- Human and ecological solidarity;
- Justice; and
- Devine wisdom (theosophy).

9.2 Philosophy of Ma’at

Ma’at refers to the ancient Egyptian concept of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice. The Ma’at Institute is based on an Afrocentric worldview: It is guided by the philosophy of Ubuntu Botho. The purpose of Ma’at Institute is to advance Afrocentric thought through various interventions. The Institute comprises a multidisciplinary team of social workers, psychologists, community and policy development and media and communication specialists. The Ma’at Institute provides telephone counselling for mental and emotional distress and psychosocial difficulties for individuals, families, and communities. It offers referral services in instances where further interventions or face-to-face help is required.

9.3 Project Aims

The CPIP response team seeks to provide support for individuals, families and communities infected and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In accordance with the values of the institute, timeous, culturally-sensitive, linguistically appropriate, context-based interventions are provided for affected families. The psychosocial response draws from communities’ explanatory models of health and illness and considers their cultural aetiologies, manifestation of illness, help-seeking pathways; and their preferred treatment options. Interventions are embedded in the Ecological Systems Framework and foster a Crisis Intervention Model in Emergency Situations.

The project seeks to address the following main psycho-social concerns:

- COVID -19 +;
- Unemployment;
- Suicide;
- Bereavement;
- Child Abuse/neglect;
- Trauma counselling
- Relationship/ family, intimate/ Social;
- Mental health, i.e., Depression and Anxiety;
- Anger; Physical health;
- Stigmatization and discrimination;
- Education/career guidance;
- Drug dependency;
- Loneliness;
- Sexual assault; and
- Self-esteem issues.

The target population groups are individuals, families, schools, organizations (Frontline Workers; Police Officers; Nurses/Doctors), and communities (rural, urban, informal settlements).

9.4 What Ma’at CPIP has Achieved

- Currently, 13 interns are contracted with the UKZN Ma'at Institute.
- 3 interns have received job offers. Ma'at Institute and ethos serves as an impetus to build confidence building lending Ma'at interns to lucrative job offers.
- One of Ma'at Institute has been mentor employed by National Prosecuting Authority.
- Ma'at Institute provides a opportunities for collaboration of discipline specialists while providing mentorship.
- The Ma'at Institute is making a sound contribution to on topical South African issues and community dialogues

9.5 Project Overview 2020 (July 2020 – September 2021)

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES – Teletherapy, Psycho-education, Trauma debriefing, Grief and bereavement, counselling, Reintegration, Victim empowerment, Deal with stigma and discrimination, Partner/couple counselling.

SCHOOL LEVEL INTERVENTIONS - Trauma debriefing, Psycho-education, Grief and bereavement, counselling, Awareness campaigns, Group counselling, Empowerment, Workshops to manage, psychosocial ills, Facilitate dialogues amongst teachers and Learners, Performing arts.

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL INTERVENTIONS - The focus at organisational level is on Frontline Workers; Police Officers; Nurses/Doctors. We render the following services: Trauma debriefing, Group counselling, Psycho-education, Grief and bereavement counselling, Awareness campaigns.

COMMUNITY LEVEL INTERVENTIONS - Community intervention are geared towards: Rural, urban, informal settlements; and Cultural and religious groups. Services rendered include the following: Trauma debriefing, Group counselling, Grief and bereavement counselling, Awareness campaigns, Community Dialogues, Workshops, and Psycho-education.

NATIONAL LEVEL INTERVENTIONS - Rendering Nation building initiatives through: Radio presentations, Conferences, Social media, Research and publications.

Comprehensive data has been generated and analysed about some of the interventions in each of these projects that have been rolled out in the schools, communities, and the health care system.

The data with full analyses will be made available online.

9.6 Research and Publications

- Children's book *Uhambo lwami ngesikhathi seKhovithi* - "My Journey during Covid-19"
- UKZN Ma'at Institute is in partnership with Madrid University and Mexico University in a research and book publication project, titled 'Research Mapping Social Work in Higher Education during COVID-19'. Data collection is ongoing, both locally and internationally.

9.7 Research Collaborations

The Members contributed to research on the impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education, as follows.

- AASB Series #01 RE-thinking the Humanities Curriculum in the Time of COVID-19.

<http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/books/series/aasb-series-01-re-thinking-the-humanities-curricul.aspx>

- AASB Series #02 Technology-based Teaching and Learning in Higher Education during the Time of COVID-19.
<http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/books/series/series-02-technology-based-teaching-and-learning.aspx>
- AASB Series #03 Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in the Time of COVID-19.
<http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/books/series/series-03-teaching-and-learning-in-higher-educatio.aspx>
- AABS Series #04 Learner and Subject at the Dawn of Research-Led Teaching and Learning in the Time of COVID-19.
<http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/books/series/learner-and-subject-at-the-dawn-of-digital-researc.aspx>

9.8 Interventions

The project pioneered the following interventions.

- Psychosocial Support for Matric Learners: Motivation and study skills
- Amajuba District Safety Forum Awareness Campaign; Gangsterism and Bullying, learning challenges, Rape Grade 10 learner
- Awareness on Gender based violence and Rape learners
- Baby, Not Now! Addressing early learner pregnancy and early parenthood
- Bullying awareness campaign Learners
- Career guidance
- Child Abuse Awareness Campaign Grade 5-7 learners
- Child protection week: Bullying (cyberbullying); children's right and responsibilities; abuse & behaviour management
- Children Right Awareness
- Co-facilitate men dialogues in collaboration with Asikhulumeni NPO
- Debriefing session matric pupils
- Self-esteem and self-worth grade 8-10
- Self-esteem and self-worth Grade 8-11
- Substance abuse awareness campaign 60 grade 9 and 10 learners
- Suicide and depression
- Trauma debriefing session Grade 5 & 6 affected learners

9.9 Strength of the Programme

CPIP uses a multidisciplinary approach and draws from a variety of fields such as Social Work, Psychology, Community Development, Media and Communication, Drama and Performing Arts. It uses linguistically appropriate communication methods and acknowledges the centrality of the culture and context in combating COVID -19, especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as funerals, mourning and bereavement, and rituals. The intervention approaches used at Ma'at Institute adopt a holistic approach to behaviour change and acknowledges the importance of positive role modeling and reinforcement in behaviour change. The Ma'at Institute teams recognizes that it is imperative to apply multi-dimensional models and the use of diverse intervention approaches such as use of creative arts to enhance/reinforce compliance.

Collaboration with the *Umsamo* Institute



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