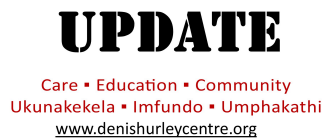


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August 2025

**Marking Women's Month at the DHC**  
**Latest on Healthcare blockade**  
**Honouring Paddy through a lecture and a visit**  
**Webinar on Counting the Homeless**



**Archbishop speaks out strongly**



**Deputy Minister delivers Paddy Kearney lecture**



**Learning from the Homeless count in Durban**

**WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2025: A DAY OF SHARING, HEALING AND HOPE**

As August is Women's month in SA, our newest manager, Nonhlanhla Nhlangulela, chose to close it in style by hosting a conference focused on women. What is more it was not planned from the top down but instead shaped by the participants themselves: homeless women, mothers from our playgroup in Dalton, women staying at the Strollers shelter, and volunteers in our kitchen. They told us what they face every day and what they need. Nonhlanhla listened and responded.

Over 130 people attended bringing together women from different walks of life, as well as representatives from partner organisations. The programme was led by Nosizwe Mji, a psychology student from SACAP, who has been interning with us and who guided the day with kindness and respect.

The first topic on Gender-Based Violence was presented by Fundi Mtolo from Lifeline and Nokukhanya Shandu from African Queen. They spoke about the many forms of abuse that women experience (emotional, physical, sexual) and how to recognise and respond to them. Nokukhanya shared an uplifting message of faith and courage: "You are not alone. God is with you." This was followed by a powerful poetry performance by Lathifa Mohammed, a UKZN social work student and regular volunteer at DHC.

For the next topic on Substance Abuse, Siyabonga Shoba from Safer Cities explained how addiction is often linked to trauma, violence, and poverty. He reminded us that addiction is not a personal failure but a social issue. Two UKZN students, Nombuso Zondi and Lwandile Mbatha, then performed a traditional Zulu dance that brought energy and joy to the room.

The Health & Wellness section featured our own Sr Dudu Ntombela and another nurse, Lolly Pather, who spoke about cervical cancer, HIV, and STI awareness. They encouraged women not to neglect their own health and reminded them that self-care is not selfish, it is necessary. The session ended with a dance performance by Mpilo Sikhakane, a psychology student from SACAP.

When we moved into Child Protection, Mandisa Mkhwanazi from Child Welfare spoke about how to keep children safe, even in difficult situations. Finally, Nicola van Turha from the Self-Employed People's Movement helped the group focus on Skills Development and Empowerment, encouraging women to think about the future and to believe in their ability to grow, learn, and earn.

One of the most moving moments came when Zolani, a homeless woman, stood up and shared a personal poem. She spoke about being beaten by the police while sleeping on the street. Her words were painful, honest, and powerful and the room was completely silent, listening intently. The day ended with our COO, Leanne Banks, expressing deep gratitude to all who spoke, performed, and participated, and a final prayer led by Nonhlanhla brought the day to a peaceful close.

This conference reminded us that real change starts with listening. When women feel safe to speak, and others are ready to hear, healing and hope can grow. We at the DHC are honoured to walk this journey alongside them.

*Photo: The Gandhi-Luthuli Peace hall at the DHC was full of women from all walks of life engaging on some relevant and challenging topics.*



Many of our supporters were deeply shocked to read last month of the actions of vigilante protesters blocking hospitals in Durban. We greatly appreciate the messages of concern that we received, including from one elderly woman who offered to refuse to show her own ID as an act of solidarity even if it meant that she might miss out on a much-needed hospital appointment. (We thanked her – but encouraged her to take care of herself first).

We would love to report that things have got better but in fact the opposite is true. With the protest now in place for 9 weeks, the police, the health department and the hospital administrators have failed to take any effective action, and patients are still being denied access. As reported before, this is blocking not just foreign nationals without documents, but also foreigners with documents, and South Africans who do not have documents and whom the protesters decide they do not like.

There have been attempts by the DHC, and by like-minded organisations such as the Gandhi Development Trust and the Active Citizens Movement, to engage with local hospitals but with limited effect. Instead, increasingly we are finding that red tape is being enforced to prevent us using alternative Government facilities that initially did work as a back-up. And we are even hearing reports of patients already inside Addington Hospital being *chased out* by protesters with the tacit approval of hospital authorities.

The Minister of Health met this month with representatives of the protesters. He reiterated the legal and constitutional rights to access healthcare, but his efforts to 'discourage' the protesters have had no effect and he has still failed to use the legal processes available to him. The DHC attempted to deploy religious leaders on the front line outside Addington Hospital so their presence would be a moral conscience to the protesters. We are very grateful to the handful of religious leaders who made the time, but were disappointed that there were not more volunteers.

The July national statement from the Catholic Bishops' Conference was reinforced locally by a strong [message of solidarity from Archbishop Jwara](#) to the Catholics of Durban (*he is pictured at the top with two of our Trustees with healthcare expertise, Nomfundo Dlamini and Dr Nondumiso Shangase*). He encouraged all to ensure that "their brother or sister, from whatever nation, tribe, or tongue is to be treated with dignity, and allowed within the law to seek aid and receive aid without fear or obstruction." Regrettably, we are not aware of similar statements from other denominations or church leaders, either nationally or locally.

Archbishop Jwara went on to "earnestly plead with the civil authorities to do whatever they can to resolve the matter with all possible haste, for lives are at stake". He is absolutely right since we have heard of more and more cases where lack of access to doctors or to medication has had a life-threatening impact on people. That is why we are working actively with other organisations and the SA Human Rights Commission to ensure that the police uphold the constitution and stop the blockade. Parallel approaches have also been made to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

We also continue to ensure that the story stays in the media for fear that people will believe that silence means it has been resolved. We have facilitated extensive coverage on radio, television and in the press including this [opinion piece in The Post](#). Meanwhile, our clinic continues to help, within its resources, the rejected patients who are coming to our door in higher and higher numbers. We are grateful to those of you who have responded to our appeal for extra funds and encourage those who can to continue [to give generously](#) to cover our rising medicine bill.

*Photo: One of the impactful media pieces was on [the front page](#) of the 'Independent on Saturday' and focused on the reaction of world-renowned Durban doctor, Prof Salim Abdool Karim, when he went to Addington Hospital and confronted the protesters.*



## DEPUTY MINISTER FOR JUSTICE DELIVERS PADDY KEARNEY LECTURE

About 50 people attended this year's Paddy Kearney Memorial Lecture at the Gandhi Settlement in Phoenix.

Although the young Mohandas K Gandhi had a law office in the centre of Durban (very close to the Cathedral), Apartheid policies forced him to live 22km away in Phoenix, a designated 'Indian area'. The site where he and his wife Kasturba brought up their family, and where his newspaper *Indian Opinion* was produced, is now a place of great historical, cultural and spiritual pilgrimage. Paddy knew it well from when he worked at the nearby Inanda Seminary School in 1970. It was an honour that the lecture was held there and also that a group of homeless people were able to contribute by getting the garden ready, [as seen in this video](#).

The event was opened by Asha Ramgobin, great-grand-daughter of the Mahatma and a human rights lawyer who has been helping us respond to the illegal hospital protesters. Hindu prayers were offered by Poonam Harry from East London, and Rev Ian Booth read from James 2:2-14: "What good is it if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?". He said that Paddy and Archbishop Hurley would certainly have been standing outside Addington Hospital (as he had the week before) resisting the actions against foreigners.

Ela Gandhi, a Patron of the DHC, then spoke a bit about the National Dialogue called by the President which she had just attended in Pretoria. She said that one of its roles was to make sure that 'our backyard conversations are communicated to government'.

The guest speaker was Hon. John Jeffery who has been Deputy Minister for Justice and Constitutional Development since 2013. Developing from the Scripture mentioned above, he spoke of Paddy as someone who was a man of faith *and* of deeds. He achieved great things while shunning the spotlight and certainly lived up to Gandhi's words "Let your life be your message".

The Minister recalled how Paddy had exposed white Christians to a different perspective on their religion and to the perspective of black Christians. He pointed out that such exposure was needed today since we still live in two countries – a wealthier white one and a poorer black one. Under these circumstances, we cannot expect racial equality as evidenced by the 2021 riots in KZN where violence exposed deep divisions between races. "Even though we have made strides toward racial, gender, language and religious equality, racism is still a problem."

Jeffery asked if wealthier white people were prepared to give financially to the transformation of the country; to transfer resources as happened when Germany was reunified. He added that corruption has seeped into all levels of our culture and so even ordinary service delivery comes with a bribe and whistleblowers are murdered. He asked what it says about our religious beliefs that we can steal and murder to cover this theft.

He finished by saying we should pick up Paddy's spear and carry on his good fight, and then quoted Maya Angelou: "A great soul serves everyone all the time. A great soul never dies."

Prof Jairam Reddy, a DHC Trustee, added his own reflections about Paddy and Prof Betty Govinden (an old friend) read some of her own poetry. The event closed with Leanne Banks (our COO) gifting a copy of the book about Paddy to the speaker and offering our thanks.

The annual Paddy Kearney lecture is held on a date near his birthday as is our annual Founder's Day event with staff. This year we visited Kwa Thintwa School for the Deaf – about 45km from the DHC in the Valley of 1,000 Hills – and heard how the school recognised two founders jointly: Archbishop Hurley and a young deaf unschooled boy called Bheki Dube.

We were joined by Amanda Clyde who had led the catering school for deaf young adults (Face2Face) at the DHC from 2018-2019. The day before the visit she taught the team some simple SA sign language. This was a chance for all our team to interact with the amazing deaf students and be inspired by their love of life and learning.

*Photo: The DHC team with Kwa Thintwa staff and students gathered around the statue of the two founders in front of the beautiful new chapel: many of them are using the internationally recognised sign for 'I love you!'*



## THE HOMELESS – WHO COUNTS?

This provocative title was used for a webinar this month hosted by the National Homeless Network. It is a double-edged question: who conducts the counting of homeless people? And who gets included when homeless people are counted?

The panel consisted of three people who have been actively involved in conducting such counts. Prof Chris Desmond, now at Wits University and a Trustee of the DHC, co-led the team when the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) were engaged by eThekwin to do a survey of the homeless in Durban in 2016. Prof Stephan de Beer, a co-founder of the National Homeless Network, is at the University of Pretoria and has carried out counts in collaboration with the City of Tshwane. Jon Hopkins is the Chief

Business Development Officer at U-Turn who operate in both Cape Town and Johannesburg and has piloted counts in both those cities.

All three speakers started by addressing the question of *who* gets counted, recognising that there is no hard definition of 'homeless' and so there needs to be clarity about who is and is not included. That definition will vary between contexts so, for example, residents of informal settlements or couch-surfers are not treated as 'homeless' in South Africa, whereas in richer countries they might be. They also pointed out the importance of including homeless people themselves in the design and execution of a survey since they have the best knowledge on the ground and can help build trust with the target community.

Tshwane has the best experience of tracking over time, using consistent methods to see how the homeless problem has evolved. By contrast, it would be unfair to compare the 2016 Durban survey (*pictured at the top*) – which was very thorough and revealed about 4,000 homeless people in the CBD – with a very crude and unreliable survey carried out more recently by the Municipality which gave a much higher number but without clear definitions or methodology.

Many of the participants expressed anxiety about the numbers that emerged from StatsSA's Census 2022. Some cities felt it was an under-count and others an over-count; all cities had reservations about the approaches taken by StatsSA despite efforts by the National Homeless Network to collaborate with them. There was some hope in the news that in Tshwane, StatsSA were taking a closer interest in how counts were being conducted.

Although knowing the *number* of homeless people was regarded as important, it was stressed that it was critical to have a richer understanding of the *kinds* of people who were homeless and why: thus more than a census, a proper survey was needed. That is because the test of a count is how effective it will be in helping prevent, mitigate or remedy homelessness: that is rarely achieved just by looking at bare numbers.

This webinar can be viewed on YouTube [using this link](#). Earlier webinars are also now available – on [Fundraising from May](#) and on [Addiction from February](#). Note that each one is about 90 mins long and the quality might be variable because of the nature of a Zoom call.

Meantime, whether you are part of an NGO or just a concerned individual, now is your chance to register for the next in-person National Homeless Conversation. This will take place in Cape Town with meetings on Tues 4 and Weds 5 Nov and optional visits to local projects on Monday 2 and Thurs 6. [Email for more information](#).

*Photo: Some of the U-turn team and the 200+ volunteers who turned out one night recently in various areas of JHB to conduct a count of the homeless.*



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