



University of Johannesburg for Societal Impact: **Gwakwani, Matatani, Mbodi and Hanyani Secondary School Community Engagement**

Overview

UJ has worked in the far northern Limpopo villages of Gwakwani, Matatani, Mbodi and Hanyani Secondary School since 2014. The Vhembe district site sits 630km from Johannesburg and is home to around 600 people across the four communities.

The project started when an industrial partner wanted to donate solar equipment for a community engagement and training exercise. Informal discussions with UJ staff led to a visit to Gwakwani and a meeting with the local chief. The work now spans all faculties, the college and the business school, industry sponsors, local government and traditional authorities.



Impact at a glance

- Matric pass rates: 52% (2022), 57.4% (2023), 92.1% (2024), 95% (2025)
- Water access established at 5 sites across 3 villages and 1 school. Hanyani Secondary School no longer closes due to lack of water
- Digital inclusion through four Wi-Fi hotspot sites
- 159 bicycles donated to grade 11 learners
- Over 500 solar lights distributed to households and project sites
- More than 20 community members trained at the Gwakwani bakery
- Reduced exposure to malaria risk, as villagers no longer need to travel to the river for water
- Matatani Sewing Centre: Empowering women for sustainable household income
- Registered ECD centre with the Department of Social Development, with three registered teachers
- Over 600 eye screenings to date with over 200 sets of prescription spectacles provided
- Three people rescued during floods, with the Wi-Fi network supporting the rescue
- Social Justice Centre supporting needs of the community, including legal support, information

Project timeline

YEAR	MILESTONE	FACULTY / DIVISION
2014	Solar borehole installed	FEBE
2015	Solar lights installed in houses	FEBE
2016	Gwakwani creche opened	FEBE
2017	Gwakwani Bakery opened	FEBE
2018	Initial radio link for remote monitoring in Gwakwani	FEBE
2019	Gwakwani cold storage installed	FEBE
2022	Gwakwani Wi-Fi installed	FEBE
2023	Matatani ECD centre opened	FEBE, Faculty of Health Science, FADA
2023	Matatani clinic opened	FEBE, Faculty of Health Science
2023	Matatani Wi-Fi installed	FEBE
2023	STEM equipment sponsorship: calculators and lab coats	Faculty of Education
2024	Hanyani Secondary School Learner Centre opened	UJ
2024	Hanyani Secondary School Wi-Fi installed	UJ
2024	Mbodi boreholes installed	FEBE
2024	Official UJ launch (4 October 2024)	UJ
2024	Career development for 14 teachers at Hanyani Secondary School	Faculty of Education
2024	Matatani creche shade net and rainwater collection tanks	Faculty of Health Sciences
2024	Matatani creche temperature-regulating kitchen	Faculty of Health Sciences
2024	Matatani container clinic and equipment	Faculty of Health Sciences
2024	Social Justice Centre opened	Faculty of Law
2025	Social Justice Centre Wi-Fi installed	Faculty of Law, FEBE
2025	Matatani borehole installed	CBE
2025	Hanyani Secondary School borehole installed	FEBE
2025	ABSA bicycles donated (Qhubeka foundation)	UJ
2025	Community solar lights distributed	FEBE
2025	Teacher training	CBE
2025	14 ECD practitioners trained from surrounding centres	Faculty of Education

YEAR	MILESTONE	FACULTY / DIVISION
2025	Water testing: 96 households and 8 sources across all three villages	Faculty of Health Science
2025	First aid training: 10 participants, 4 first aid grab bags for the villages	Faculty of Health Science
2025	Eye screening: Matatani Primary (185 screened, 38 spectacles) and Hanyani Secondary School (320 screened, 96 spectacles)	Faculty of Health Science
2025	3D-printed anatomy models and teaching material for Hanyani Secondary School	Faculty of Health Science
2026	Sewing Centre opened	Faculty of Humanities
2026	Student solar lights	FEBE
2026	Matatani solar drier installed	Faculty of Science
2026	Eye screening, adults: 130 screened, 68 spectacles and 40 readers handed out	Faculty of Health Science
2026	Water testing: households and sources across all three villages	Faculty of Health Science

Projects by village

Departments, sponsors and project leads for each site, as recorded by the project team.

Gwakwani

PROJECT	UJ DEPARTMENT	SPONSORS
Remote monitoring	FEBE	Sigfox South Africa
Gwakwani Buelelani bakery	FEBE	Industrial Development Corporation, The Bakery Incubation Centre of South Africa
Gwakwani creche	FEBE	Schneider Electric
Gwakwani cold storage	FEBE	UJ
Gwakwani Wi-Fi	FEBE	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
Mabila solar borehole	FEBE	Schneider Electric

Matatani

PROJECT	UJ DEPARTMENT	SPONSORS
Ontika community crèche	FEBE, Health Science, FADA	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact, WHRC
Matatani clinic	Health Science	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact, WHRC
Litshani solar borehole	College of Business and Economics	-
Matatani Wi-Fi	FEBE	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
Matatani food garden	FEBE	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
Matatani Stitching Futures	Faculty of Humanities	-
Matatani solar dryer	Faculty of Science	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
ECD practitioner play-based training	Faculty of Education	LEGO Foundation

Mbodi

PROJECT	UJ DEPARTMENT	SPONSORS
Zwovhonala solar borehole	FEBE	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
Ontika solar borehole	FEBE	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
Mbodi Social Justice Centre	Faculty of Law	MNS Attorneys
Mbodi chicken coop	JBS	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact

Projects by village

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Hanyani Secondary School

PROJECT	UJ DEPARTMENT	SPONSORS
Hanyani Secondary School solar borehole	FEBE	UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
Hanyani Secondary School Wi-Fi	FEBE	South African Jewish Board of Deputies
Hanyani Secondary School Learning Centre	FEBE	South African Jewish Board of Deputies
Donation of calculators	Faculty of Education	Investing for Innovation NPO
Career guidance for learners and teachers	Faculty of Education	-
UJ-Barloworld Science Centre	Faculty of Science, FEBE	Barloworld, UJ GES 4.0 for Societal Impact
ABSA bicycles donated	UJ	Qhubeka Foundation

With gratitude to our valued sponsors, past and present, whose continued support has helped transform lives and create lasting impact across Gwakwani, Matatani, Mbodi and Hanyani Secondary School.

