

**Die HOOP Projek en die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US)
se visie vir volhoubare landelike ontwikkeling**

**Toespraak deur prof H Russel Botman, rektor en visekanselier van die US,
ter geleentheid van (1) die viering van die 10de bestaansjaar van die
Ukwanda Sentrum vir Landelike Gesondheid, en (2) die inwyding van die spil van die Ukwanda
Landelike Kliniese Skool te Worcester, Do. 25 Oktober 2012**

Thank you for your introduction, Professor Volmink. Let me also thank you for acknowledging all our VIPs, which means that I can now simply say, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon, molweni, goeiemiddag!

Ek val sommer dadelik met die deur in die huis. Hoekom is hierdie inisiatief belangrik? Why is this initiative so significant? Rural areas are very important – because, as you saw in the video, nearly half of South Africa’s population is rural.

There exists a romantic notion of the “simple, idyllic country life”, but the harsh reality is that far too many people in rural areas suffer the burden of poverty – and everything that goes with it.

This is recognised in the National Development Plan of the National Planning Commission of South Africa, which makes “rural development” a priority. Premier Zille, as you know, the National Development Plan calls for “direct and immediate measures to attack poverty” in rural areas. And among the tactics suggested in the Plan is the provisioning of good-quality education and a health-care system able to meet the demands placed on it.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ukwanda does exactly that. It trains health professionals in rural and other underserved areas specifically to improve recruitment and retention; and it strengthens health care by delivering graduates who are socially responsive to the South African context.

Ukwanda has also boosted our capacity to train a greater number of doctors and other health professionals. This will help address the critical shortage that our country is experiencing in this regard. The Ministers of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, has set medical schools the very challenging goal of tripling the number of doctors trained in the country – from 1 200 per annum to 3 600.

Stellenbosch University supports the drive to produce more doctors and other health professionals. And we are in part relying on the extra capacity created by the Ukwanda Rural Clinical School, in close partnership with the Western Cape Provincial Government.

This facility is ground-breaking. It is the first of its kind in SA and, as far as we know, on the continent. International research has shown that if you recruit students from rural areas, and you provide them and other students with extensive exposure to rural health challenges and opportunities, you stand a better chance that they will base themselves in rural areas when they start practicing one day. That is what makes the Ukwanda Rural Clinical School special.

The School’s “hub” is here in Worcester, but there are also “spokes” in the surrounding towns of Ceres, Robertson, Caledon, Hermanus and Swellendam, where innovative models are being developed for clinical training.

Dames en here, dit bring my by my hoofpunt uit – Ukwanda is veel meer as net ’n opleidingsfasiliteit vir die Fakulteit Geneeskunde en Gesondheidswetenskappe. Dis ’n omvattende platform vir landelike ontwikkeling. Dis as’t ware nog ’n kampus van die Universiteit Stellenbosch wat ons hier neersit om die mense van hierdie omgewing van diens te wees.

Hoekom sê ek so? Want dis nie net ons Fakulteit Geneeskunde en Gesondheidswetenskappe wat hier werksaam gaan wees nie. Volgende jaar al trek SciMathUS en ons Afdeling Telematiese Dienste hier in. Dan is daar ons departemente Sosiologie en Maatskaplike Werk, asook ons Regshulpkliniek wat al hier betrokke was.

Some of our other departments who should be a good fit here include Psychology, Visual Arts, Drama and Food Science. Such faculties as Engineering, AgriSciences and Theology are also interested. And there were good discussions with the Faculty of Education earlier this week.

Mayors Kivedo and De Bruyn, I am sure you can see the potential here. Just imagine the benefit to the communities if our researchers were to focus their attention on real-life challenges at grassroots level in your district municipalities.

And to my colleagues who may be thinking of getting on board our rural platform, can you imagine how this kind of access to the “laboratory of real life” would enrich our academic work?

We have big plans. Our Worcester “Campus” is just the first step. Stellenbosch University wants to roll out similar platforms for rural development in other areas. And we want this experience to become a model that can be replicated elsewhere in our country and in the rest of Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ukwanda is a good example of the science-for-society approach of Stellenbosch University. And that, essentially, is what our HOPE Project is about – to use our key strengths in the search for solutions to the major challenges faced by our people.

As one of the world’s top universities, we pursue academic excellence and practice cutting-edge research to the benefit of the community. This is the central meaning of a “pedagogy of hope”. It helps us see our academic disciplines through the eyes of communities and their needs.

I want to thank all our partners for helping us. Thanks to the Department of Higher Education and Training, which funded the bulk of the cost of the Ukwanda RCS. Premier Zille, thank you to the provincial government of the Western Cape and its officials for supporting this initiative. I want to single out the Department of Health for helping us make this dream come true.

Burgermeesters Kivedo en De Bruyn, dankie vir jul steun – en ons sien uit daarna om verder met julle saam te werk. Ons sien ook daarna uit om ons bande met Worcester se gemeenskap van mense met gestremdhede te versterk.

Thank you also to the following co-funders:

- *The Holland-Stellenbosch Medical Foundation*
- *The US government, through its support of the Stellenbosch University Rural Medical Education Partnership Initiative (SURMEPI).*
- *And two private donors, Mrs Ulrike Merkel and Dr Edwin Hertzog.*

Dames en here, Ukwanda skep hoop vir mense wat dit die nodigste het, maar dis nie net leë optimisme nie; dis ware volhoubare hoop omdat dit gegrond is op die wetenskap.

Saam met al die leiers van die drie regeringsvlakke, en die leiers van hierdie gemeenskappe vat ons hande en bou hierdie dorp, hierdie distrikte, hierdie provinsie, hierdie land, hierdie vasteland.

We have driven the strategy to make the world a better place and to improve the lives of our people for a number of years, and we intend to continue, for the sake of future generations. Thank you.