



## *Green Roots & Innovating for Impact Programmes*



*A Bukelani Pulse Special Edition*

*July 2025*

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Developed and Delivered by</b> | <b>Bukelani Institute</b>                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Year Launched</b>              | <b>2025</b>                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Participating Schools</b>      | <b>Esizibeni High School</b>                                                                                                                                  |
|                                   | <b>Mcothoyi High School</b>                                                                                                                                   |
|                                   | <b>Birdswood Secondary School</b>                                                                                                                             |
|                                   | <b>Aquadene Secondary School</b>                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Underwritten by</b>            | <b>KaMakhiwa Capital</b>                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Finals Date</b>                | <b>10 July 2025</b>                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Venue</b>                      | <b>Durban Botanic Gardens</b>                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Theme</b>                      | <p><b>“Learning to Lead, Leading to Heal”</b></p> <p><b>Positioning the learners as leaders-in-practice for healing their communities and the planet.</b></p> |

|                                        |                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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## SECTION A : BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. Programme Overview

The **Green Roots** and **Innovating for Impact** programmes are flagship youth development initiatives of the Bukelani Institute, designed to ignite ecological awareness and social innovation among high school learners. Grounded in experiential learning and community relevance, these programmes empower learners in Grades 9 and 10 to engage deeply with pressing environmental and societal challenges within their local contexts.

**Green Roots** cultivates knowledge and action around **biodiversity, indigenous plant use, and sustainable land practices**, while **Innovating for Impact** nurtures creative, **youth-led solutions to issues** such as mental health, teenage pregnancy, energy access, and healthcare delivery. Together, these programmes offer a transformative platform where knowledge meets agency, and where young people are not just future leaders, but current changemakers.

### 2. Delivery Approach

Both programmes are designed around:

- **Project-Based Learning**
- **Systems Thinking and Human-Centred Design**
- **Storytelling and Reflective Practice**
- **Community Engagement and Local Relevance**
- **Mentorship and Facilitated Support**

Facilitators support learners over weekends, holidays, and after-school sessions to conceptualise, prototype, and prepare their ideas for presentation.

### 3. Key Milestones – 2025 Cycle

| Milestone                                         | Date             | Description                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Programme Launch</b>                           | 29 March 2025    | Official start of both programmes with school and community onboarding                   |
| <b>Orientation &amp; Training of Facilitators</b> | April 2025       | Weekend sessions focused on pedagogy, mentoring, and group facilitation                  |
| <b>School-Based Activities Begin</b>              | April–June 2025  | Learner sessions, project work, community engagement, journal keeping                    |
| <b>Mid-Programme Check-ins</b>                    | May 2025         | Progress reviews, coaching visits, and feedback loops                                    |
| <b>Beach Clean-up Campaign (Green Roots)</b>      | 25 May 2025      | Community environmental action event in eThekweni in partnership with local stakeholders |
| <b>Seedlings Support to Mcothoyi High</b>         | 6 June 2025      | Bio-gardening support and community day project showcase                                 |
| <b>Programme Summit</b>                           | 2 June 2025      | Internal review and OKR alignment meeting with the Bukelani team                         |
| <b>Judging Rubrics Finalised</b>                  | Late June 2025   | Rubric preparation for Green Roots and Innovating for Impact Finals                      |
| <b>Finals Event Held</b>                          | 10 July 2025     | Culmination event at Durban Botanic Gardens with 120+ guests in attendance               |
| <b>Finals Awards Announced</b>                    | 10 July 2025     | Announcement of category winners and Overall School Champion                             |
| <b>Review &amp; Impact Measurement Phase</b>      | July–August 2025 | Structured evaluation, storytelling documentation, and planning for 2026                 |



Stakeholder Engagement Event at Birdswood Secondary School, 29 March 2025. Image by Bukelani Institute

#### 4. Outcomes and Impact Highlights

- **Over 70 learners** directly participated across both programmes.
- **4 high schools** (Esizibeni, Mcothoyi, Aquadene, and Birdswood) advanced to the Finals.
- Projects addressed **10+ pressing social and environmental issues**, with real-world application potential.
- Strong involvement of **Champion Educators, local traditional leaders, and parents**.
- Stakeholder presence elevated the credibility of both programmes.



## 5. Integration into Bukelani Institute's Broader Vision

These programmes fall under the **Impact Education and Community Empowerment Pillars** of the Bukelani Institute. They represent a strategic investment in **youth capabilities, systems thinking,** and **social entrepreneurship**, and contribute to the Institute's mission of:

***“Advancing Humankind’s Potential.”***



*Mcothoyi High School – Induction Day, 29 March 2025. Image by Bukelani Institute*

## SECTION B : THE JOURNEY

### *The Journey of Green Roots & Innovating for Impact: From Seed to Stage*

October 2024 – July 2025

*A narrative account by Bukelani Institute*

Every great idea begins as a seed—uncertain in shape, but undeniable in possibility. The **Green Roots** and **Innovating for Impact** programmes were no different. Conceived as part of the Bukelani Institute's commitment to Advancing Humankind's Potential, they began quietly, behind-the-scenes, on **04 October 2024**, with conversations, whiteboards, and late-night strategy calls.

This was not simply about launching another school programme—it was about **creating a platform where young people could connect to land, to society, and to themselves**.

### **Act I: Concept to Blueprint (October 2024 – February 2025)**

The earliest phase focused on **Programme Concept Design**. By early October, a robust **Concept Note** and **Theory of Change** had been developed. These framed the twin ambitions:

- To equip learners with ecological literacy and action through **Green Roots**
- To foster localised, youth-led problem solving through **Innovating for Impact**

By mid-November, the team had identified and approached schools that aligned with the programme ethos. This required **crafting personalised invitation letters, FAQs**, and preparing **Stakeholder Engagement Briefs** to ensure clear communication and value proposition.

Work quickly intensified. Between **November and February**, the **Bukelani Institute** developed the foundational ecosystem of the programme:

- **Structured Curriculum Strategies** for both programme streams
- A working **Timetable**, mapped over weekends and holidays
- A clear breakdown of **Team Roles and Responsibilities**
- **Implementation Plans and Budgets**, mapped tightly given limited resources
- **Standardised MoU** templates, information packs and school onboarding processes

This phase was *meticulous, design-heavy, and deeply collaborative*. It laid the tracks for the journey to come.



Team Bukelani in one of many planning sessions. This photo was taken at our 2<sup>nd</sup> HQ on 31 October 2024. Image by Bukelani Institute



## Act II: Adaptive Design and Stakeholder Engagement (February 2025)

February was a month of **refinement and dialogue**. Stakeholder engagements were rolled out—school leadership, community representatives, local authorities, and internal teams were briefed. The conversations led to meaningful programme adjustments.

Three key changes were made:

1. **Inclusion of Grade 10 learners**, following requests by schools
2. **Revision of workshop schedules** to better accommodate exam periods and local events
3. **Appointment and induction of facilitators**, ensuring they were aligned with both the content and the communities they'd serve

The vision was sharpening. The real work was about to begin.



Stakeholder Engagement at Birdswood Secondary School. Image by Bukelani Institute



### **Act III: The Launch – Into the Field (29 March 2025)**

On **29 March 2025**, the programmes were officially launched in participating schools that had signed **MoUs with Bukelani Institute**.

This was more than a formality—it was the first real connection between learners, facilitators, and the programme vision. The launch sessions were full of energy, anticipation, and heartfelt commitment.

**"We are not just learning. We are growing into something,"** said one learner in their journal entry.

### **Act IV: Learning, Growing, Building (April – June 2025)**

The delivery phase was where **transformation began to bloom**.

Facilitators met with learners regularly—over weekends, on holidays, after school. They worked through **thematic content, hosted activities, and guided learners to think critically, care deeply, and act boldly**.

#### **Key Learning Activities Included:**

- **Understanding biodiversity and social enterprise models**
- **Ideation sessions** to identify relevant local challenges
- **Biodiversity garden designs** using indigenous plants
- **Crops and soil assessments** tied to school contexts
- **BioBlitz preparation and execution:** mini-campaigns or surveys to engage community action
- **Prototype development:** from low-cost medical delivery ideas to teenage wellness centres
- **Use-case testing and observation**, where feasible
- **Storyline crafting:** preparing final narratives and visual materials for the Finals

This phase was the beating heart of the programme. It was real, complex, and joyfully chaotic. There were breakthroughs—and breakdowns. There were weekends with full attendance, and others with absenteeism due to sports, family obligations, or simple fatigue.

But week by week, *ideas took root and confidence blossomed.*



*Working Hard neh! Team Mcothoyi, Innovating for Impact. Another image by Bukelani Institute*





*Community Bioblitz, 25 June 2025 , Richards Bay. Image by Bukelani Institute*

## **Act V: Preparing for the Grand Stage (June – Early July 2025)**

Internally, June was intense for the Bukelani Institute team.

### ***Finals Preparation Tasks Included:***

- Supporting ***school-led BioBlitz events***
- Final ***briefings on judging rubrics***, criteria and performance tips
- Preparing ***participant notes*** for schools to fine-tune their presentations
- Confirming logistics, including:
  - ***Venue*** selection and setup (Durban Botanic Gardens)
  - ***Catering team appointment*** and crafting a learner-friendly menu
  - ***Printing of certificates*** and branding of trophies
  - ***Designing seating arrangements***, ensuring inclusivity and presence
  - ***Selecting Programme Directors and Judges***
  - ***Developing the programme flow***, MC scripts, and timing protocols



Every detail mattered. This was no ordinary school event. This was **a production**. A showcase of hard-earned brilliance.



*Bioblitz Showcase Event at Mcothoyi. Image by Bukelani Institute*

## ***The Clouds That Hovered***

Every great journey has its storms.

The programme was **self-funded**, primarily through **KaMakhiwa Capital**. This placed tremendous strain on what could be offered. The Bukelani team worked with **modest means and ambitious intent**.

- **Absenteeism** was an ever-present challenge, particularly during exam seasons
- **Last-minute fund requests** (for transport, materials, meals) tested the budget
- **Facilitator endurance risk** loomed large, as they gave up their weekends repeatedly
- Learner **participation fatigue** became a concern in mid-May

Yet, against all odds, the schools stayed the course. The facilitators endured. The parents supported. The learners **showed up—again and again**.

## ***Finale – And Then There Was Light (10 July 2025)***

And then, ***the curtain rose.***

On 10 July 2025, the vision became reality. Learners stood proudly under the ancient trees of Durban Botanic Gardens, sharing what they had learned, built, tested, and become.

It was a celebration of grit, intelligence, and Ubuntu.

From concept note to closing ceremony, this programme proved that ***with the right soil and care, seeds of potential grow into forests of possibility.***

We are proud of the journey. Humbled by the learners. Energised by the lesson learned.



*Champion Educator, Mr Mkhize of Aqaudene Secondary School, at the Finals on 10 July 2025*



## SECTION C: THE FINALS

**STAGE REVIEW: “The Futures We Planted” – A One-Day Only Performance by the Young Visionaries of Bukelani Institute**

*Reviewed by: Team Bukelani | Durban Botanic Gardens | 10 July 2025*



*The audience at the Finals on 10 July 2025. Image by Bukelani Institute*



## **ACT I: CURTAIN RISES ON THE UNLIKELY HEROES**

From the moment the curtain rose on the leafy amphitheatre of the **Durban Botanic Gardens**, it was clear—this was no ordinary school function. This was theatre of the heart. A stage for **youth, hope, and rising voices**.

The anthem **Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika** did not merely open the show—it **summoned the ancestors and called the nation to attention**. And then, out stepped the director of this great production, **Sir Vincent Zulu**, who with the ease of a seasoned conductor welcomed us into the story. “Relax, have fun,” he said. The players, he assured us, were ready. And oh, were they ever.

## **ACT II: GREEN ROOTS, GOLDEN DREAMS**

From backstage emerged a troop of young actors, each armed not with scripts but with **skits, slides, journals, and soul**. The **Green Roots** cast tackled environmental injustice like seasoned protest poets. They built biodiverse gardens and performed allegories of the land. There were compost champions and climate crusaders. Each team a new chorus, each act a new verse in a growing eco-epic. One learned the various indigenous plants and their role in the biodiversity ecosystem, including as pest rappellers, medicinal use and personal care.

One could feel the spirit of Makhanda, the echoes of Credo Mutwa, and the fierce urgency of now stitched into every gesture and spoken word.



*A presentation by Team Birdswood at the Finals.*

### **ACT III: INNOVATING FOR IMPACT – THE REVOLUTION IN FIVE MINUTES**

And then came the firebrands of *Innovating for Impact*, marching to centre stage with nothing but ***lived experience, community wounds, and healing innovation***.

A team with fire in their voices spun a tale about ***teenage pregnancy and peer pressure***, offering a hotline and a local support hub as a solution. One team dramatized ***mental illness in the rural areas***, ending in a proposal for safe spaces and storytelling as therapy.

Another team reimaged the drug delivery system in rural clinics households using —Shakespeare never dared imagine such relevance.

Energy availability has historically been a big problem in South Africa, cue the team that proposed revolutionary energy production for rural households, off-the grid and in small energy toolkit – a green energy solution that does no harm to the environment.

Yet another team presented a demo kit of a revolutionary watering system for plants. Through the system, the right amount of water is released for irrigation according to the crop and the sensors that indicate precise amount of water required.

If **Green Roots** spoke to *healing the Earth*, **Innovating for Impact** screamed for *healing ourselves*.



*Team Esizibeni presenting on Innovating for Impact at the Finals*





*Above – Team Aquadene presenting at the Finals.*

#### **ACT IV: INTERLUDE OF UBUNTU.**

Somewhere in between the judges tallying scores and skits concluding, the unscripted magic of the day emerged.

*Competing schools sang for each other.*

*Learners cheered their rivals.*

*As some lines were forgotten—fellow competitors and the audience applauded and aided in finishing the script*

In that moment, this reviewer saw what no curriculum could measure: *the choreography of community.*

## ACT V: THE AWARDS – A FINAL CURTAIN CALL

The drum roll came. The tension thick as theatre fog. And then the spotlight found **Esizibeni High School**, victors of **Innovating for Impact**, and ultimately crowned **Overall School Champion**. Their joy was uncontained—an ovation well earned.

**Mcothoyi High School**, equally brilliant, walked away with the **Green Roots Cup** and a heartfelt first-runner up finish in Innovating for Impact. The applause lingered.

**Aquadene** and **Birdswood** followed with strong showings, the latter proving that a runner-up spot can still feel like a standing ovation.



*Mcothoyi High School with Certificates of Participation. Ended up collecting the Winners' Cup for Green Roots and First Runners'up Prize for Innovating for Impact – an outstanding showing. Dazzling storytelling and practical solutions*





*That winning feeling. The team representatives showing the trophies won at the Finals.*



*Esizibeni Secondary School wins the Overall Schools Cup! Beaming with excitement as facilitators watch on and applauded by stakeholder representatives*



## **EPILOGUE: THE SHOW GOES ON**

And so, the curtain has fallen on the **2025 Green Roots & Innovating for Impact Finals**, but the echo remains. The audience didn't leave the theatre. It became the theatre.

The performers didn't step off stage. They became **the future**.

This wasn't a show.

It was a **movement in costume**.

A **policy paper in performance**.

A **rehearsal for the revolution**.

Take a bow, Bukelani Institute.

Take a bow, learners.

***This was not a play. It was a prophecy.***

***Tickets for 2026?***

*We'll be in the front row again.*

## **ACT VI – The Unsung Heroes Take a Bow:**

No great show exists without a brilliant backstage crew:

- **Mphumuzi Makanya and Lindokuhle Gumede – The Finals Programme Directors**
- **Nonjabulo Zulu & Aphelele Nocuze– The *Innovating for Impact*, and *Green Roots* Programme Managers.**
- **Nomzamo Ngoza**, the silent maestro of logistics and PR.
- **Wandile Dlamini**, the rhythm section, ensuring the stage stood firm.
- **Njabulo Hlatshwayo & Seluleko Mthikhulu – Technical Directors**
- **Mr. Sikobi**, our lone photographer—recording the memory of every smile, every tear.

- **Khanyisani Ngcobo** – Finals Executive Support Service
- **Mthembeni Makanya & Nomvelo Mchunu** – Guest Relations
- **The Catering Crew** (For mouthwatering meals) – **Sinothando Dlamini, Siphumelelo Dlamini, Anele Ndlovu, Sthombe Dlamini, Zandile Dlamini, and Siphumelelo Makhathini,**

*And of course, the judges, our critics in the wings, applauding and agonising over every scorecard.*

### **The Participating Schools**

Thank you for entrusting us with your learners and allowing us to walk this journey with you:

- **Esizibeni High School** – Overall School Champion
- **Mcothoyi High School** – Green Roots Winner
- **Birdswood Secondary School** – Innovating for Impact Second Runner-Up
- **Aquadene Secondary School** – Green Roots Second Runner-Up

### **Parents & Families**

Thank you for your unwavering support, transport, encouragement, and belief in the potential of your children.

### **Local Traditional Authorities**

For granting permission to work in your communities, and for always opening your hearts and doors.

### **Principals & Champion Educators**

Your leadership and trust in our programmes made all of this possible.

Special thanks to the **Champion Teachers** who:

- Sacrificed weekends and after-school hours
- Bridged learners, families, and the Bukelani team
- Embodied Ubuntu and excellence in action

## **Facilitators Extraordinaire**

Guides, mentors, and champions of the learners' creative spirits:

- **Ms. Mandisa Mtitana** – *Innovating for Impact Facilitator*
- **Ms. Sphindile Nxumalo** – *Green Roots Facilitator*
- **Ms. Thabiso Shandu** – *Innovating for Impact Facilitator*
- **Ms. Noluthando Nxumalo** – *Green Roots Facilitator*

## **Programme Partners & Supporters**

### **Strategic Collaborators**

- **Mr. Khanyisani Ngcobo** – Founder & Executive Chairman, *SESI*. Steadfast support throughout the journey.
- **Mr. Zamani Dlungwana** – Co-Founder & Chairman, *Bansundu Marine Club*. Always present. Always supportive.

### **Institutional & Government Stakeholders**

Your presence elevated the Finals and your support throughout added great value:

- **Eskom**
- **eThekweni Municipality**
- **Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)**
- **Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA)**
- **Ikusaselihle NPO**
- **Adams Mission Community SOS Centre**
- **Vulindlela Accountants**
- **SAZIO (PTY) LTD**



- **Ithuba Agri**
- **Bansundu Marine Club**

Special thanks to **DARD eThekweni** for the **tools for trade** provided to Mcothoyi High School. Also special thanks to SAPPI for the gift packs during the **Bioblitz** event at Richards Bay



A selection of stakeholders enjoying the Finals

### Community Connector

- **Mr. Thabani Ngubane** – Founder & Chief Executive, Ithuba Agri  
King Cetshwayo's anchor and enabler of vital partnerships.

### Photography

- **Mr. Sikobio** – Event Photographer  
For capturing every tear, triumph, and treasured moment with heart and humility.

## Final Note from the Team Principal

*“To all who made this production possible—thank you. You went beyond duty. You gave your best. You reminded us that we are indeed the ones we’ve been waiting for. The Finals were not the end—they were the spark. As we move into the Review and Impact Measurement Phase, may the lessons guide us, and may the seeds we planted continue to grow.” — Sir Vincent Zulu, Team Principal & CEO*

*Asante Sana. Siyabonga. Re a leboga. Thank You.*

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## What’s Next?

The **2025 Review and Impact Measurement Phase** will inform:

- Curriculum refinement
- School selection expansion
- Partnership deepening
- Development of a **Learner and Educator Impact Storybook**
- Planning for **Green Roots and Innovating for Impact 2026**, with regional rollouts

## Contact Information

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