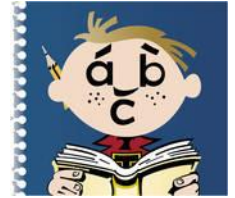


COVID-19 derails SOUNDS



At the beginning of March, the SOUNDS project was all systems go with its key partners making ambitious plans for the future. Those plans have now changed. Two months have passed and the annual Global Grant report has just been compiled and it contains the sorry story of the impact of COVID-19.

There are four major partners in the SOUNDS project of RCPE, namely PEN, US Peace Corps, Lethabong Creche Forum and University of North West.



PEN

PEN was originally based in the inner-city crèches of Pretoria and in 2020 started to expand. Presently PEN has four crèches in Johannesburg, six crèches in the Winterveldt, two in Nellmapius and two in Kagiso. In addition, seven new crèches have joined in Pretoria. The RCPE project site in Winterveldt had also requested that a crèche be established on their site with the assistance of PEN, plans which were taking shape. All these plans are now frozen as has all the teaching that went on in these crèches.



The children love to play with SOUNDS with all eyes, ears and attention focused on the active student



US Peace Corps

US Peace Corps plays a major role in the roll-out of SOUNDS. In 2019, it placed 85 volunteers that had been trained in SOUNDS in communities in ZKN and Limpopo. They were tasked to roll out SOUNDS in their community primary schools. These volunteers are all now back in the USA and the Peace Corps groups planned for July are on hold.



Lethabong crèche forum

Lethabong crèche forum (where 21 crèches were actively using SOUNDS) had scheduled to expand SOUNDS to a further 85 crèches in April this year. This was a very ambitious plan which, even if 50% successful, would be a significant development.



University of the North West

The latest and probably most critical addition to the SOUNDS partnership is the University of the North West. At the beginning of 2020, it had trained about 180 pre-service B. Ed. first year student teachers in the use of the SOUNDS programme. The plan was to place these students in schools from 31 March until 23 April as well as during a second session of placement in July 2020. The plan included doing an evaluation of the impact of the SOUNDS programme on the learning abilities of the pupils. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting effect on the work-integrated learning sessions has meant that the placement of student teachers in schools did not and will in all probability not take place at all in the 2020 academic year.

The plans for all four major partners (and smaller partners) have thus ground to a halt, with all the communities concerned suffering from the stress and disruptions this pandemic has brought with it. The road back to normality lies somewhere in a very uncertain future.

The Global Grant was meant to last three years. It is most likely that we will have to apply for a fourth year if the Rotary Club of Pretoria East is to achieve all that it has set out to do.