VICE CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED AWARD
FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Prof Alfredo Terzoli
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Prof Alfredo Terzoli has been committed to mutually beneficial collaborations between the university and the community for over a decade. He is the THRIP Grant Holder and Head of the Telkom Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Distributed Multimedia at Rhodes University (RU). Since 2005, he has led three community engagement projects at Rhodes University – the Siyakhula Living Lab (SLL), e-Yethu Schools Project, and Capacity Building at the University of Namibia. Prof Terzoli has demonstrated exceptional leadership in initiating and directing community engagement projects. Sustainability has been a key factor of these projects, with programmes continuing for at least five years.

Launched in 2005, the Siyakhula Living Lab (SLL) is a collaborative initiative launched in 2005 between the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and Rhodes University (RU). SLL seeks to develop a multifunctional community communication platform and build technical skills in marginalised communities. The project focuses on uplifting rural areas and alleviating poverty through Information Communication Technologies (ICTs). It is currently piloted in the Mbashe Municipality, Eastern Cape. The SLL aims to support development by enhancing tourism, promoting local arts and crafts, and improving agricultural practices. Siyakhula adopted the Living Lab approach in 2009 to address rural ICT development. This approach fosters community involvement and co-creation. The platform has evolved to include sub-projects like e-health, e-government, and e-learning, addressing various developmental challenges. The SLL has deployed a local loop access network, connecting 16 schools with computer labs and providing community access points. The project has also resulted in the creation of Reed House Systems, a software company commercialising ICT4D products.

Prof Alfredo Terzoli initiated and led the project, securing funding, liaising with governmental and funding organisations, and supervising postgraduate research. He also led collaborative and transdisciplinary research while providing technological support for local schools. Prof Terzoli also played a key role in establishing Reed House Systems, which sought to ensure community ownership and benefit from the software factory's initiatives.

The e-Yethu Schools Project, initiated in 2005 by Rhodes University, aims to coordinate ICTEd4D activities in the Grahamstown township. The project builds on previous connectivity research by the Telkom CoE and involves staff and students from the Education and Computer Science departments. It focuses on providing ICT infrastructure, technical support, and training to schools, fostering collaboration, and enhancing ICT literacy among teachers and learners.

e-Yethu supports eight schools in the Grahamstown township, with four more joining soon. The schools receive computer facilities through various sponsors, including the CoE, NGOs, and the Department of Education (DoE). The project has organised computer literacy workshops and offers accredited courses, resulting in increased ICT skills among educators. e-Yethu has enabled local schools to participate in international ICT projects, attracting further support and donations. In 2011, e-Yethu became part of the Siyakhula Living Lab (SLL), extending its impact to the broader community. The project has generated numerous research publications and enhanced collaboration among university departments.

Since September 2004, the Telkom CoE at Rhodes University (RU) has maintained a formal relationship with the Computer Science Department of the University of Namibia (UNAM). At that time, UNAM lacked full research support in Computer Science and had limited Internet bandwidth. The collaboration aimed to support UNAM's transition to a single major BSc in Computer Science and develop staff and research capacity. In 2008, a partnership with the South Africa - Norway Tertiary Education Development Program (SANTED) provided R2.6 million for a three-year capacity-building project, involving curriculum development, staff mentoring, and postgraduate supervision. The collaboration led to joint research on virtual classrooms for developing countries, resulting in four publications. The project culminated in the creation of a Telecom Centre of Excellence at UNAM, launched on February 10, 2011, providing ongoing support for UNAM's Computer Science Department.