

Case study: Health

Refurbished trauma unit at Chiawelo community health centre in Soweto saves lives 24/7

The Chiawelo Community Health Centre, sees a high volume of patients who cannot afford private hospital fees. It often receives the overflow of patients from Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, making it exceedingly difficult to deliver quality medical treatment, given its limited medical equipment and facilities.

The Eskom Development Foundation identified the need for a fully equipped trauma unit at Chiawelo that operates 24 hours a day, relieving the pressure from the influx of patients at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital and saving countless lives. Together with the South African Medical and Education Foundation (SAMEF), they undertook to refurbish the entire unit, equipping it with state-of-the-art complete diagnostic and monitoring equipment.

CEO of the Foundation, Haylene Liberty-Nel, says: “Eskom wants to make a lasting impact to touch people’s lives. In terms of healthcare, there is a big need in the community as Chris Hani Baragwanath is overcrowded and Chiawelo is often called upon to relieve that pressure. By funding the refurbishment of the trauma unit at Chiawelo, we are making a real impact for years to come. If you just look at the attitude of the staff and patients, you can see what a difference we have made. It’s so powerful.”

Liberty-Nel is humbled by the whole experience, the reaction of the patients and especially the hospital staff.

“It’s one thing to look at a project proposal in a boardroom when it is all on paper,” she says, “but when you actively see the impact of the project when it is completed, it’s food for the soul! There is a saying which I believe in that says ‘it’s more blessed to give than to receive.’ My job is to give on behalf of Eskom, which is an amazing privilege.”

Thembelihle Kubheka, Hospital Manager at Chiawelo, is completely overwhelmed by the new unit.

“It’s such a feeling, I can’t describe it,” she says. “It makes me so emotional. When patients first walked into the brand new unit, they thought we were going to say we made a mistake, they can’t be in here because it’s so beautiful!”

Liberty-Nel acknowledges the capable and dedicated team who implemented the whole refurbishment and offers her sincere thanks to SAMEF for their sterling work.

“When you see the commitment and enthusiasm of the hospital team, you know that it will be sustainable and it will stand for a long time to come,” she comments.