



Australia Awards



Improving the quality of life of people living with physical disabilities in South Africa

A case study: Ncedo Ludada
Master of Clinical Rehabilitation, Flinders University, 2015

What is the context?

Access to mobility assistive devices is a basic human need for many people living with a disability and is recognised as a priority under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2000). However, only one in 10 people globally who need prosthetic and orthotic devices have access to them (World Health Organisation, 2011). This situation is worse in developing countries, where only five per cent are believed to have access. Delays in accessing physiotherapy or rehabilitation services can worsen mobility impairment, further excluding people from education and employment and increasing their mortality rates.

South Africa ratified the Convention in 2007, making access to assistive technologies a legal obligation. Medical Orthotist Prosthetist Ncedo Ludada was determined to contribute to this right and received an Australia Award to study a Master of Clinical Rehabilitation at Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia.

Mr Ludada's Reintegration Action Plan focused on improving the quality of life for people with physical disabilities in South Africa's Eastern Cape province when he returned home from his studies. Very few prosthetic devices are available despite high demand in the Eastern Cape, where at least 1,130 patients require such devices and 450 are on the waiting list.

In addition to this challenge, the province has also faced staff-level issues. Only 12 Medical Orthotist Prosthetists are employed by the Department of Health, a decrease of 55 per cent over the past six years. The Australia Awards in Africa are helping to overcome these barriers by providing scholarships to three staff from Walter Sisulu University (WSU).

What did Mr Ludada accomplish?

Mr Ludada introduced a community-based approach to providing orthotist and prosthetist (OP) services to disadvantaged communities, collaborating with the WSU. In total, 188 amputees from marginalised communities have been fitted with prosthetic limbs, reducing the patient backlog in Bedford Hospital by 42 per cent.

Mr Ludada also received \$48,000 from the Australian Government's Direct Aid Program which he used to supplement WSU's limited budget. These funds were used to buy material and prosthetic equipment, which enabled the university to expand OP training opportunities for students.

Highlights



After completing a Master of Clinical Rehabilitation at Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia, Ncedo Ludada was appointed Lecturer at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and later promoted to a senior lecturer.



Mr Ludada received \$48,000 in Direct Aid Program funding from the Australian Government to buy devices to demonstrate to WSU students how to manufacture Orthotist Prosthetist (OP) devices. This has benefited 58 marginalised people, who have been provided with low-cost OP services in Eastern Cape. With support from the Australian Government, WSU has helped reduce the amputee backlog at South Africa's Bedford Hospital by 42 per cent.



Mr Ludada now provides students with advanced clinical training and practical skills on device fitting, using the skills and knowledge he gained through his scholarship.

How did Mr Ludada succeed?

Before studying in Australia, Mr Ludada worked as an entry-level Prosthetist Orthotist at the government-run Eastern Cape Frere Hospital. On returning to South Africa in 2016, he joined WSU as a lecturer. In 2017, he was promoted to Senior Lecturer. In this role, he taught core clinical OP modules and supervised and conducted research.

Equipped with the advanced clinical rehabilitation skills, scientific knowledge and soft skills he gained in Australia, as well as the expert networks he established while studying, Mr Ludada took the leap and established Ludada and Associate Orthopaedic Services, a private practice. At the practice, he uses advanced private practice technology to provide internship opportunities to students.

Mr Ludada uses his practice to help students with on the job training, an important initiative given that the OP budget is limited and there is no centre at the university for students.

Mr Ludada says that WSU management's support has contributed to his achievements and enabled him to improve the quality of training and service provided by the university's OP Department.

Where is Mr Ludada now?

Mr Ludada resigned from WSU in October 2018 to focus on developing and expanding Ludada and Associate Orthopaedic Services. He plans to establish a local Academic Prosthetic and Orthotic Centre in the Eastern Cape region to serve everyone regardless of their socio-economic status. The clinic will be the first of its kind in South Africa.

Mr Ludada will continue to work with WSU as a strategic partner, supporting their academic activities and collaboration. He also plans to partner with the Department of Health to deliver OP services throughout the province. He hopes this will strengthen the public-private dimension of his work.



Student from Walter Sisulu University attending to a patient's prosthetic leg.

Lessons learned



Multi-stakeholder partnerships help provide marginalised sections of the population with better access to badly needed services.



Public-private partnerships can be a cost-effective way to implement services and projects and enable their sustainability.



Soft skills gained on scholarship help alumni negotiate with industry authorities.



Public-private partnerships improve quality of training, exposing students to high end technology and helping them contribute meaningfully.