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UCT leads collaborative launch of music-based maternal mental health programme

6 May 2026 | 09:00-13:00 | Isivivana Centre, Khayelitsha

The [Perinatal Mental Health Project](#) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), in partnership with the Institute for Life Course Health Research at Stellenbosch University, will join the Khayelitsha community on World Maternal Mental Health Day to host the South African launch of Community Health Intervention through Music Engagement for Maternal Mental Health (CHIME).

The launch will bring together mothers and community members, musicians, healthcare workers, researchers, academic partners and civil-society organisations to celebrate a programme that uses shared, culturally embedded music to support the mental health of pregnant women and new mothers.

Small groups of women meet for a structured series of music-making sessions, led by trusted community healthcare workers. Songs draw on local musical traditions and are adapted to carry messages of psychological resilience, social support and practical strategies for coping with the challenges of pregnancy and early motherhood.

The launch will be hosted in Khayelitsha, a community that has long been at the forefront of community-based health innovation in South Africa and stands to benefit directly from CHIME. The day will feature live performances, community dialogue and reflections from the partners working together to bring CHIME to South African communities.

World Maternal Mental Health Day is commemorated annually on the first Wednesday of May to raise awareness around mental health challenges women face during pregnancy and after birth. Globally, one in five women experience a mental health condition during the perinatal period, with impacts felt not only by mothers, but by their children, families and communities. In low- and middle-income countries, including South Africa, rates are even higher, and services are often limited, stigmatised or out of reach.

“Through CHIME, music becomes more than expression – it becomes a way of building connection, resilience and support among mothers. Launching on World Maternal Mental Health Day highlights the urgent need for approaches that meet women where they are,”

said [Associate Professor Simone Honikman](#), director of the Perinatal Mental Health Project at UCT.

In South Africa, CHIME, funded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), is led by Professor Sarah Skeen of the Institute for Life Course Health Research, Department of Global Health at Stellenbosch University, and Professor Lauren Stewart of the School of Psychology, University of Roehampton, with the UCT's Perinatal Mental Health Project as an academic partner.

The South African phase focuses on intervention development and feasibility testing, working closely with community health workers, musicians and mothers so that the songs, settings and delivery model reflect the lived realities of women in Khayelitsha and other communities. The aim is to generate the evidence needed for larger-scale implementation in local primary care and community settings.

- Members of the media wishing to attend the launch are requested to [RSVP](#) via email.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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