Introduction
- Adverse conditions in townships make it challenging to raise healthy children.
- The inhabitants of South Africa’s informal settlements face a cycle of poverty which often leads to poor health.
- This cycle can be credited, in part, to neglect from the South African health care system but extends far beyond through a multitude of socioeconomic factors.

Objective of Internship
Working for a local NGO I hoped to learn more about child health and to better understand the systematic forms of oppression in the health sector that were resulting in the impoverishment and neglect of entire populations.

Work Profile
Philani focuses on the prevention of child malnutrition and the rehabilitation of underweight children by supporting pregnant mothers until their child reaches five years old through clinic-based services, early childhood education and income generating projects. The mentor mother program specifically trains successful mothers from the area to support and empower others in their community through holistic primary care interventions.

My role
- To create and run a scientific study questioning the accuracy of MUAC arm measurements in determining if a child is underweight when they are used by health professionals in the field
- To work with a dietician and run clinics throughout the township for malnourished children.
- To talk through specific cases with Xhosa nurses and act as a resource for victims of trauma in the area.

Facts:
- 1 in 5 children in Khayelitsha don’t survive to 5 years of age
- Malnutrition is the root cause of 50% of these deaths

Conclusion
The MUAC system of measurement is unreliable when used by trained health workers, putting children from vulnerable communities at high risk for undetected malnutrition.

Questions
Should the approach that health workers take with MUAC measurements be readdressed or must health groups invest in more accurate methods for determining malnourishment?

Looking ahead
I plan to focus my studies around global health and will continue working with Philani on the study through the winter.

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