Kenneth Gardens *Community Project*

Focus on Capoeira

At the end of September one of the greatest masters of Capoeira Angola in the world today - Mestre Cobra Mansa - came to Durban to do an intensive 3-day workshop for local capoeiristas (including students from DUT, UKZN & MUT).

A highlight for the KGIP was that the opening event of this workshop took place at Glenmore Primary School on breakup day 28 Sept 2012! The participants were the schoolchildren who have been learning Capoeira and indigenous music for the past year as a cultural component of KGIP.

The action started from 11H00 as the school bell rang and kids gathered eagerly in the school hall to welcome the Mestre. Under the mentorship of regular instructors Dr Sazi Dlamini from the Music Dept at UKZN, Nkanyiso Shabalala (MUT capoeira)and Maria Giampietri (DUT capoeira), the kids had prepared several traditional song and dance items, including some with the traditional Zulu bow -the umakhweyana.

This lively introduction was followed by a snack provided by KGIP - and then the hard work began! The Mestre put everyone through their paces with a vigourous Capoeira movement session including acrobatics. The kids coped well and delighted themselves with their achievements. Obviously the scrutiny of the Mestre was the inspiration to rise to the challenge!

This was followed by a class on the music of Capoeira Angola which includes singing (in Portuguese), and playing instruments such as the Brazilian musical bow (the berimbau), the drum (atabac), the pandeiro, the agogo (cowbell), and the reco-reco (the scraper). And finally all the elements that the children had learnt came together in playing the game of Capoeira - the roda. The Mestre made a point of playing with every child in the roda, whilst making sure that each child also took a turn at playing the instruments during the game. In this way, the children understand the energy, spirit, shared responsibility and interdependence which is essential for Capoeira.Finally, at 15h00, it was time to go - but the kids were left all fired up with the energy of the legendary Mestre Cobra Mansa - a first for South African schools.