

In Loving Memory of Jenny Glennie

It is with deep sorrow and profound shock that we announce the untimely passing of Dr Jennifer Anne Glennie on 2 December 2025 in a tragic car accident.

Jenny, as she was affectionately known, was not only the long serving Founding Executive Director of Saide but also its heart and soul for over three decades. After she officially retired from her executive role in 2024, she continued to serve as a Trustee and Strategic Advisor, remaining actively engaged in shaping Saide's direction with her characteristic wisdom, generosity, and passion for education. Jenny's passing is an immense loss to the Saide family and the broader education community across South Africa and the African continent.



Since Saide's inception in the early days of South Africa's democracy, Jenny was guided by a compelling vision to expand educational access and success through open learning. She led Saide with deep conviction, building a committed team and catalysing impactful partnerships across the education system. Under her leadership, Saide became a pioneer in open and distance learning, a trusted partner to government and institutions, and a hub for innovation in course design, quality assurance, and educational technology.

Jenny played a key role in shaping education across the African continent, including her leadership in establishing the Council on Higher Education, serving on the Board of Directors of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), her two-decade contribution to the Council of Unisa, her representation of South Africa on the Commonwealth of Learning (where she received an Honorary Fellowship), and her leadership in founding Sol Plaatje University.

Her legacy lives on in the many transformative initiatives she spearheaded, notably OER Africa, Siyaphumelela, and the African Storybook. These initiatives, like Jenny herself, are deeply grounded in social justice and open learning principles: African Storybook now boasts over 5,000 unique storybooks in more than 270 languages of Africa; OER Africa recently received the prestigious 2025 OEGlobal Board Award Winner for Organisational Leadership, while the Siyaphumelela Network now reaches more than 80% of university students in South Africa.

In 2023, the African Council for Distance Education honoured her with a Legacy Award for her outstanding contribution to the field, and in 2024, Wits University honoured her with a [Doctorate in Education](#) in recognition of her lifelong service to education, a fitting tribute to a life devoted to learning and social justice. She was recently a panelist at the G20 Social Summit in Johannesburg where she spoke with characteristic passion and conviction about expanding access to higher education for Africans.

At her retirement celebration last year, Jenny remarked:

"It has been my privilege to have worked, laughed and been inspired by you all. Each of you has brought your special talents to the important work that we have done together. You have shown care and compassion for each other, stepping in when needed. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

We now say farewell with heavy hearts. Jenny's spirit, intellect, humility, and fierce sense of purpose will continue to guide us. We are grateful beyond words for her leadership, mentorship, and enduring friendship. Our thoughts are with Jenny's beloved family and friends during this time of grief. We will share details of the memorial service in due course.

May she rest in power.

On behalf of the Saide Family

Ahmed Bawa, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees

Innocent Nkata, CEO of Saide