

Nendila

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA



University of Venda
Creating future leaders

In commemoration of the Human Rights Day, Advocate Bongani Majola reflects on the right to access health care services in South Africa



On 18 March 2024, the University of Venda's Ismail Mahomed Centre for Human and Peoples' Rights in the Faculty of Management Commerce and Law hosted a Human Rights Day Public Lecture. The distinguished guest speaker for this event was the former Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission Advocate Bongani Majola. The event aimed at enlightening the University of Venda (UNIVEN) community about the prevalent violations of human rights in South Africa, with a particular focus on the right to healthcare services.

During the Public Lecture, Advocate Majola clearly reviewed the state of healthcare services in South Africa and explained strategies that individuals can adopt to advocate for and advance it in their communities.

The lecture served as a significant platform for fostering awareness and understanding, shedding light on existing gaps in knowledge and practice that necessitate both immediate and future interventions. Advocate Bongani Majola, drawing from his extensive expertise in human rights issues in South Africa, helped in identifying challenges, proposed potential interventions, and formulating approaches to effectively promote and advance the human rights of affected populations in the country. The event was attended by 130 participants.

Advocate Majola noted that the month of March is commemorated as human rights month, which presents us all with a unique opportunity to reflect on our democracy and its underpinning commitment to human rights. Explaining why the right to health is so crucial, he set the stage for an insightful presentation by clarifying that the right to health does not guarantee any of us good health or absence from illness. He noted as well that the enjoyment of the right to health depends on the realisation of other rights or existence of other factors. For instance, illustrated Advocate Majola, the enjoyment of the right to health depends on having access to safe drinking water, good road, nutritious food, sanitation and housing.

In particular, the learned Professor asserted that the good road is important because in most rural parts of South Africa, this is often a huge problem. Citing his experience during his visit to Eastern Cape as Chairman of the South African Human Rights Commission, Advocate Majola explained that in the Eastern Cape, there is a community where people live 8 km away from a hospital facility but there is a river in between which whenever flooded often forces community members to drive 60 km (if they have the means of transportation) to access the health facility. He believed that in that circumstance, a good bridge would make a world of difference to the health and wellbeing of the community members as it would enable them to get quickly to the hospital. He also

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stated that the right to health includes both the physical and mental wellbeing of a person, and that it also includes the issue of accessing health care which must be as available, adequate, affordable, and accessible.

Narrowing his presentation down to access to healthcare in South Africa, Advocate Majola indicated that apart from being available in the Constitution of South Africa, the right is guaranteed in a number of international human rights to which South Africa is committed. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic and Social Cultural Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990). Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003). In our sub-region the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted a Protocol on Health (1999). He indicated these instruments recognise the right of everybody to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

In his further view, the distinguished speaker explained that the preamble to the South African Constitution sets out the ideals that the founders of our democracy believe we should strive towards achieving, and these ideal include the need to improve the quality of life for all citizens. He then advised that in this month of reflection about rights, we should embrace that right to access healthcare can only be achieved if everyone plays his role as an active and faithful citizens and patriots well. Hence, it is a month to reflect on questions such as: what efforts are we making as individuals, communities and other organs of state to ensure that our preferences do not undermine the right of others to access healthcare; what efforts are we making as individuals, communities and other organs of state to enhance the promotion and protection of another person's right to access healthcare service; and when we enjoy our rights do we create space for others to realise their own rights. While there is no doubt that state should be accountable for fulfilment of such rights as the right to health, it is important these questions be addressed across all scales of responsibility and duty.

Advocate Majola highlighted some of the factors that limit access to health care in South Africa. These include, shortage of staff nurses, shortage of auxiliary staff nurses lack of resources and poor infrastructure, and shortage of specialists. He illustrated with copious examples drawn from his experiences as the former Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission how these factors do undermine the right to access healthcare services in South Africa. He narrated the ordeals that old persons, women, children, and sometimes men who complain of GBV endure experience while pursuing access to health care services. In particular, he described the issues of cultural stigma associated with patients of mental health across South Africa which led to mistreatment, wrong labelling and sometimes their

untimely death. He lamented that all through the provinces, weaknesses in the health sector have become a fertile soil for humongous medico-legal claims and damages awards which divert resources that would otherwise be available to a provincial health department to provide access to health care services.

While rounding up his wonderful presentation he stressed the collective responsibility, beyond the state, for the protection and advancement of human rights. Advocate Majola's impassioned call to action resonates as a poignant reminder that the pursuit of human rights is a shared endeavour, compelling us all to reflect on our individual and communal contributions towards a more just and equitable society.

The Interim Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning,



Prof Tharien van der Walt gave the welcoming address on behalf of the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, Prof Modimowabarwa Kanyane. She set the stage by highlighting to the eager audience because the theme of the lecture is important.

Professor Ademola Oluborode Jegede, Interim Di-



rector of the Ismail Mahomed Centre for Human and Peoples' Rights, warmly welcomed Advocate Bongani Majola, as the esteemed guest speaker. With admiration, Professor Jegede highlighted Advocate Majola's distinguished credentials, his profound impact as an inspiration to many, and his remarkable ability to wield power with grace and humility. Until December 2023, Advocate Majola held the position of Chairperson at the South African Human Rights Commission, overseeing its crucial mandate of promoting and protecting human rights across the nation. The Commission, comprising six full-time and two part-time commissioners, operates with a staff of nearly 200 across nine provincial offices, actively working to monitor and assess human rights observance in South Africa.

Prior to his tenure at the Commission, Advocate Majola served in prominent roles both domestically and internationally, including as Professor of Law and Dean at various universities in South Africa, and as the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. His extensive experience in legal practice and academia is underscored by his contributions to public interest litigation and his leadership at organizations such as the Legal Resources Centre in South Africa. With a strong background in law and a commitment to justice, Advocate Majola's presence at the event exemplified his ongoing dedication to advancing human rights, as acknowledged by Professor Jegede, who also expressed profound gratitude to Ms Annette Lansink, the former dean of the School of Law, for her attendance.



While proposing a vote of thanks, Advocate Gideon Joubert, standing in for Professor Lonias Ndlovu, the interim Director of the School of Law, acknowledged the informative presentation made by the speaker and thanked the distinguished audience for honouring this public Lecture, making it a success.



First Entering Students respond positively to the First Things First Campaign

First Thing First (FTF) Awareness Campaign is a nationally run HIV Campaign for all 26 University students across the country, coordinated by Higher Health (HH). The purpose of the campaign is to encourage university students and staff to be screened and tested for HIV, TB, STI's, Hypertension, Diabetes, Cancer to ensure that all graduate uninfected and those who are already infected or born with HIV, live positively and graduate alive being healthy.

At the University of Venda (UNIVEN), the campaign started on 11 and ran until 15 March 2024. UNIVEN Campus Health conducted the First Things First awareness and TB campaign at Cafeteria Lapa. During the campaign, the following services were rendered: HIV Counselling and Testing, STI screening and Treating, TB screening and testing, Cancer screening Services. The UNIVEN's Department of Biokinetic, Recreation and Sports Science under the Faculty of Health Sciences, provided Wellness Services. Partners from the Department of Health, PAPSWA and Choice Trust were available throughout the week rendering HIV Testing Service (HTS) to the LGBTQI+ community within the campus including initiation of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

Programme Assistant: HIV/AIDS Project, Ms Maggie Hlungwani revealed that "During the campaign, a total number of 1525 were counselled and tested - 100 staff, 831 first entering students and 694 returning students. Compared to the 2023 academic year, a total number of 1088 students and staff were tested and counselled - 50 staff, 354 first entering students and 684 returning students. Many students accessed the campaign especially the first entering students in 2024 compared to the 2023 academic year.

The campaign continued with the face-to-face evening dialogue sessions that took place at off-campus accredited accommodation from Monday to Friday and students from the following residences were reached: Grand Royale, River Estate, MShelly 1 and 2, Samvuni, Forest Hill, Green Stone, Yellow stone, Sandton, Simeka and Emlajeni. Topics covered included GBV, Mental Health, STI, Contraceptives, TB, HIV and Guarding your heart to prevent crime.

At these accredited off-campus accommodation, a total of 1504 was reached in 2024. The sessions were well attended compared to the year 2023 wherein a total of 956 students participated. Day and evening sessions were supported by officials from Higher Health since FTF is a national campaign implemented by all Institutions of Higher Learning. Ms Hlungwani indicated that the campaign was a success and thanked all the people who participated.



Department of Social Development celebrates Social Work World Day Symposium jointly with the two universities in Limpopo



The University of Venda (UNIVEN) co-hosted and celebrated the 2024 World Social Work day Symposium jointly with the University of Limpopo (UL) and the Department of Social Development of Limpopo Provincial Government. The Symposium was held at UNIVEN C1 Education Lecture Hall from 18 to 19 March 2024. This was the 2nd Symposium hence the 1st Inaugural Symposium took place in Polokwane in 2023. The celebration of the World Social Work day took place under the theme 'Shared future for transformative change.'

The event was graced by the presence of the MEC for Social Development, Mme Nandi Ndalane. When addressing Social Work professionals including Students in the profession and other invited stakeholders, the MEC said "the symposium serves as a beacon of hope and empowerment, designed to equip you with new knowledge, tools and strategies to enhance your capacity to effect positive change in the communities you serve. The knowledge you gain here will not only strengthen your skills but also empower you to innovate, collaborate and be resilient in the face of adversity."

As key drivers to transformative change in our society, she further said "by sharing our visions aligning our goals and working collaboratively we can overcome challenges, break barriers, and create a more inclusive equitable and just world for every individual."

The MEC indicated that as a department they are grateful of this partnership and trust that it will have meaningful impact into this critically important profession. In addition, she pointed that "the department continues to grow the collaborations with the Non-Profit Organizations employing Social Workers and Social Auxiliary Workers within the province to serve our communities."

She acknowledged the presence of representatives from the Department of Health and Correctional services and mentioned that through this symposium they will strengthen their relationship and collaborate at technical level for the benefit of our communities.

The MEC urged the people present to embrace the opportunities that lie ahead and let our shared vision guides us towards a future where every person is valued, respected, and empowered. She finally commended social workers for their tireless efforts and thank them for being the heart and soul of transformative change.



As the host, the University of Venda's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni when welcoming the guests, shared the University strategic location which is within the UNESCO, Vhembe Biosphere Reserve that has a unique rich biodiversity, which offers us a remarkable advantage to leverage the region's rich biodiversity and unique environmental context for the development of relevant and impactful programme qualifications.

Among other things, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal spoke about positioning the University for impact and relevance. He showed that the University should not only excel in teaching and learning but should also aim to be relevant and responsive to the needs and challenges of the communities around us.

Prof Nthambeleni expressed that the theme for 2024 World Social Work-Day Symposium that is 'Shared Future for Transformative Change', emphasises the need for social workers to adopt innovative, community-led approaches

that are grounded in indigenous wisdom and harmonious coexistence with nature. He reminded people that social work is not simply a job but a calling, a commitment to serving humanity with compassion and dedication. The Vice-Chancellor further indicated the importance of social workers as they are catalysts of systemic change, advocating for policy reforms and institutional improvements to address root causes of social problems. As he continues, he described social workers as bridge builders' fostering collaboration between communities, organizations, and government agencies to create sustainable solutions for a better tomorrow.

In conclusion, Prof Nthambeleni commended the Department of Social Development and the two universities of Venda and of Limpopo for jointly organising and hosting this important symposium that will provide a powerful approach to responding to complex problems that isolated efforts cannot solve.

The University of Limpopo's Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Prof Richard Madadzhe expressed a message of support. In his message he highlighted that students that we produce must be caring in such a way that they are fully professionals in their profession who will not divulge information of their clients. His message was central to uBuntu, which means a person is a person through another person; therefore, we need each other in many ways.

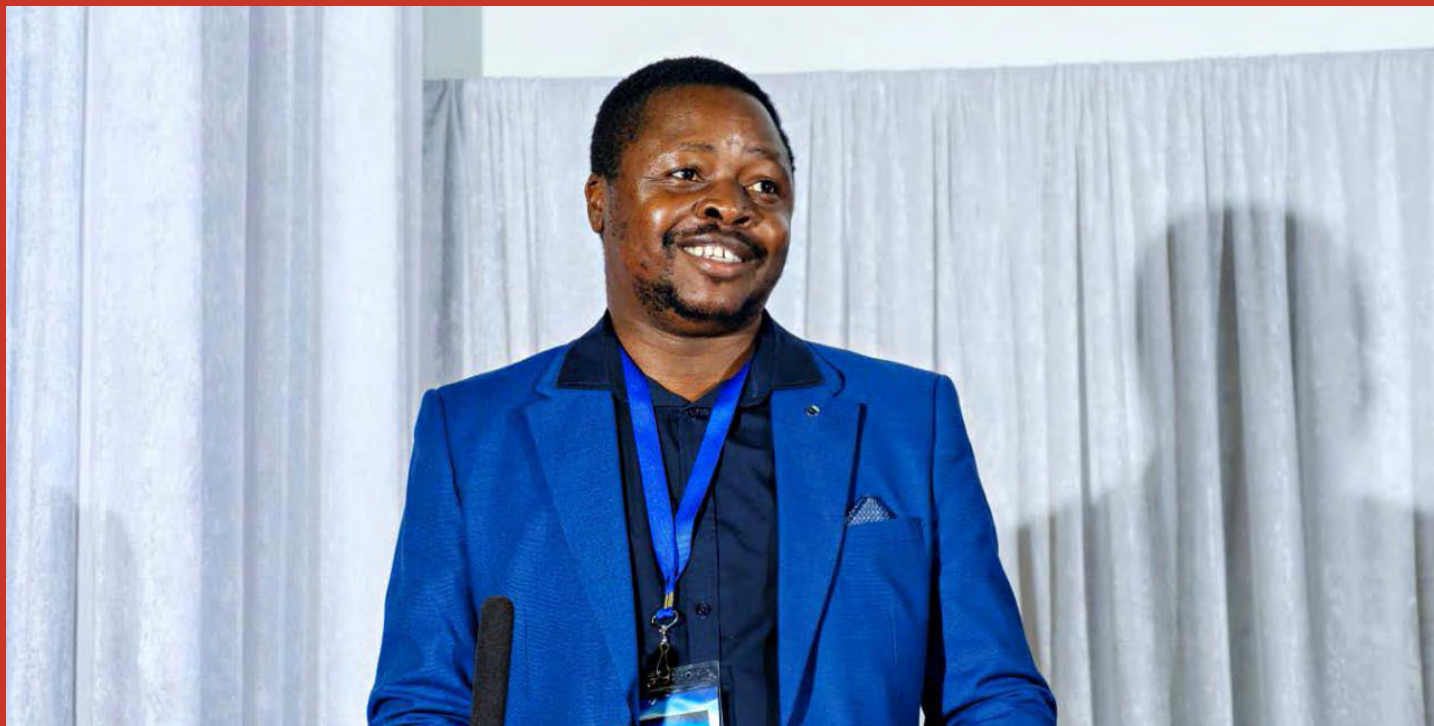
Other messages of support came from the UNIVEN's HoD of Social Work Department, Dr Jimmy Budeli; representatives from Limpopo Tourism Agency (Mr Chris Ramoshaba); Limpopo Gambling Board (Mr Walter Mashilo) and Limpopo Liquor Board (Dr John Mudau).



The Acting Chief Director of Social Welfare Services, Ms Kgomotlokoa Maibele presented the state of the Social Work Services in Limpopo. She spoke of the key legislations that are fundamental in the Social Work services. Ms Maibele also highlighted the achievements of the Department of Social Development.



A Project to address critical health challenges and fostering advancements in healthcare delivery, research capacity, and intellectual property creation



Pioneering TB-HIV Solutions: Prof Makhado's GENIUS-CARE Project Elevates Healthcare with South African Medical Research Council SAMRC Funding

The University of Venda is thrilled to announce that Prof Lufuno Makhado has secured substantial funding (close to R1m over 18 months) from the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) for the groundbreaking project "Genotyping Integration: Enhancing RR-TB-HIV Co-infection Management in South African Primary Care Clinics - A Comparative Research Endeavor (GENIUS-CARE)." This project aims to revolutionise the management of co-infected RR-TB and HIV patients by integrating genotyping into the Nurse-Initiated Management of Drug Resistant TB (NIMDR-TB) nurses' roles in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

The GENIUS-CARE project was initiated in response to the SAMRC Grants Innovation and Product Development's (GIPD) "Request for Application: HDI Capacity Development Grants for Investigator-Initiated Research: HIV Implementation Science in the Clinical Setting" by the SAMRC. This call aimed to enhance research capacity and foster international collaboration and mentoring in historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) in South Africa in partnership with Johns Hopkins University (JHU) in the USA.

Prof Makhado, a Full Professor in the Department of Public Health and the Deputy Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies, is recognised for his extensive research in public health, with a particular focus on health systems to strengthen integrated HIV-TB co-infection and non-communicable disease (NCD) management. The GENIUS-CARE project is expected to enhance the capacity of Clinical Nurse Practitioners, improve patient outcomes, and align with the World Health Organisation's recommendations for decentralised patient-centred models of care. This initiative promises better health quality and cost savings for the community. Prof Makhado said, "Addressing critical health challenges and fostering advancements in healthcare delivery, research capacity, and intellectual property creation enhances the University of Venda's reputation".

Prof Makhado's collaboration with mentor, Prof Jason E. Farley from Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing (JHUSON), the Director of the Centre for Infectious Disease and Nursing Innovation (CIDNI), and other distinguished team members is vital for the success of the nested project within the BringBPAL2Me Trial. Dr Norbert Ndjeka, the Director of the South African National TB Programme, connects the project to the National Clinical Guidelines Committee, ensuring the utilisation of study-derived evidence. Prof Denise Evans, a principal scientist at the Health Economics and Epidemiology Research Office, contributes her expertise in the financial and practical aspects of Whole Genome Sequencing for the TB programme, aligning with the project's objectives.

With appreciation, Prof Makhado added, "I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my wife, Dr Thendo Gertie Makhado, for her unwavering support throughout the writing of this grant proposal. Additionally, I extend my gratitude to my national and international mentors and collaborators (Prof Farley, Dr Ndjeka and Prof Evans) who have contributed their expertise and insights to this project. I am also immensely grateful to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Postgraduate Studies, the Director of Research and Innovation and the Department of Public Health HoD at the University of Venda for their constant motivation and encouragement."

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza as she congratulates Prof Makhado said "It is with great joy to receive this good news. The University of Venda community is proud of this significant achievement and eagerly anticipates the positive impact of Prof Makhado's research on public health in South Africa and beyond."

Minister Sihle Zikalala pays tribute to UNIVEN Leadership when unpacking the Expropriation Bill



On Friday, 08 March 2024, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Sihle Zikalala, MP, visited the University of Venda (UNIVEN). The purpose of his visit was to engage with the staff and students on the Expropriation Bill. The engagement with the UNIVEN community ties with the on-going process of government's consultation with communities about the Expropriation Bill that is being worked on by the Council of Provinces. The Public Lecture was intended to clarify and emphasise the fact that the Expropriation Bill has a clause that indicates zero compensation when it is passed into law.

The Minister paid tribute to the leadership of the University of Venda for being torchbearers of transformation, empowerment, and equality. He expressed this when reflecting on the remarks made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services, Dr Robert Martin on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni.

Minister Zikalala said that the Public Lecture takes place on International Women's Day which reminds the people about their collective responsibility to dismantle patriarchy, eliminate sexism, and achieve gender equality. At the heart of the scourge of Gender-Based violence that afflicts communities, is the persistent challenge of gender inequality and marginalisation of women.

He indicated that "as we take a closer look at our journey of land reform programme and the Expropriation Bill, let us remember that our programmes and policies must pay particular attention to women."

The Minister highlighted that the Expropriation Bill under discussion was drafted by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to replace the Expropriation Act of 1975 which is not in line with the Constitution and transformation imperatives. This was after extensive consultation and with assistance of constitutional experts. It is therefore anchored within the property clause in Section 25 of the Constitution.

He reminded the audience that for centuries, the subjugated majority of South Africans were denied the right to own property dating back to colonial times, the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, and

the Group Areas Act which saw many people displaced of prime property through forced removals and dumped in slums and ghettos, by the colonial and apartheid governments.

The Minister articulated that throughout our history, land has remained an emotive topic and a source of protracted conflict.

He explained that the Bill has undergone Parliamentary Public Participation processes in the form of Public Hearings, conducted by the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

The Minister also highlighted on the three-tier land reform programme namely: Land Redistribution, Land Tenure Reform, and Land Restitution.

In conclusion the Minister said, "It is in our hands to realise land reform in South Africa that can make all of us to say that indeed, South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white."

In addition, he said "We look to progressive institutions like UNIVEN to ensure that this Bill is effective and helps us realize the vision of a transformed South Africa where all our people, regardless of race, gender or income can feel that they indeed belong to this rich and beautiful country."

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services, Dr Robert Martin prefaced his welcome remarks by sharing some highlights about the University's strategic direction. He indicated that the University of Venda has long been a beacon of hope, a place where dreams take flight, and future leaders are shaped. He substantiated this statement by expressing that a large number of the Minister's delegation are graduates of the University of Venda, including the two MEC's who were in attendance and the Deputy Director General from the National Government. Dr Martin provided context for the mission and positioning statement of UNIVEN in the current Strategic Plan which envision the University of Venda that has impact and relevance as an institution of higher learning.

Dr Martin further expressed that the strategic location of UNIVEN within the UNESCO, Vhembe Biosphere Reserve with a unique rich biodiversity,

offers the University a remarkable advantage to leverage the region's rich biodiversity and unique environmental context for the development of relevant and impactful programmes.



He indicated that this public lecture is crucial, hence for so many years land expropriation and land reform have been a contentious issue in our country. He alluded that this engagement came at the right time when we are gearing ourselves up for the general elections. "This will in our view enrich people's understanding of how land will be redistributed for the benefit of communities around us, added Dr Martin.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's Deputy Director General Policy and Research, Mr Livhuwani Ndou, while rendering purpose of the event, provided an update on the current status of the Expropriation Bill.

The MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison in Limpopo, Mrs Florence Radzilani in her message of support said "We have identified land reform as a priority of this democratic Government, because we have witnessed the far-reaching ramifications, caused by land dispossession amongst our people. As the breadbasket of the SADC Region, and largely the Continent, we remain committed to ensuring that this process will not harm this Country's economy and will be discharged delicately. If anything, the land expropriation programme must ensure an equitable share of the land and improve the economic conditions of the majority of the people of this Country."

Student representatives also added their voices to the Minister's Public Lecture. The SRC Secretary General, Ngelekanyi Maduwa appreciated the government for giving the University a piece of land in Makhado. He pleaded with the Minister to assist with the installation of solar panel systems to address power outage challenge. The Secretary of SASCO UNIVEN branch, Nkateko Shivambu urged the government to continue supporting the institutions of higher learning in their endeavour to continue providing quality education.

The University Registrar, Dr Joel Baloyi on behalf of the University Management conveyed his gratitude to the Minister for such a thought-provoking Public Lecture. He also thanked participants (students and staff) for their presence and contribution to the Public Lecture.

The programme was facilitated by the Limpopo MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, Nkakareng Rakgoale.

BSc Nutrition Fourth-year Students benefit from a transformative Lactation Management workshop



The National Department of Health developed a training course to capacitate health professionals, including doctors, nurses, dieticians, and nutritionists, to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. The Department of Nutrition in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Venda (UNIVEN), in collaboration with the Department of Health (William Eddie and Thohoyandou Health Centres), held a transformative four-day Lactation Management workshop from the 12 to 15 March 2024 for the final-year Bachelor of Science in Nutrition students. This training is in preparation for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) for final-year Nutrition students in healthcare facilities from 08 April to 04 October 2024. The workshop was meticulously crafted to empower students with the necessary skills and knowledge to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. It served as a vital platform for nurturing the capacities of student nutritionists, fostering their ability to assist mothers in initiating and sustaining breastfeeding from birth up to two years and beyond.

Through the comprehensive modules of the course, students delved into crucial aspects of lactation management, ranging from lactation physiology to practical strategies for effective breastfeeding support. The course enabled students to grasp and apply theoretical concepts during their WIL in Community Healthcare Centres, ensuring a holistic learning experience. Moreover, this initiative was instrumental in bolstering the efforts towards achieving Mother-Baby Friendly Initiative status in healthcare facilities and communities. The Lactation Management Coordinator, Dr Cloupas Mahopo indicated that "by equipping students with the requisite skills, we are fostering environments conducive to mothers' and infants' optimal health and well-being."

student engagement in their educational journey. She fervently urged students to actively participate in the training session, reminding them that it had been tailored specifically for their benefit. She also extended a hearty welcome, expressing gratitude towards the organisers and representatives from the Department of Health Vhembe District for their invaluable contributions to the students' training experience.

The students were guided on aspects including health challenges, the global and national context of breastfeeding, policies and strategies aimed to protect, promote, and support exclusive and continued breastfeeding. In addition, topics such as the nutritional composition of breastmilk and its value in the infants' growth and development, key principles for sustaining successful breastfeeding for at least two years of life and/or beyond, correct techniques for expressing and storing breastmilk, physical challenges that could hinder infants from being breastfed, communication skills for empowering healthcare professionals to facilitate successful breastfeeding and assisting mothers in stopping breastfeeding were discussed. Issues such as myths (cultural beliefs) impacting breastfeeding practices were among the topics covered.



In her highly spirited welcome remarks, the Interim HoD of Nutrition Department, Dr Tshifhiwa Mandiwana passionately emphasised the pivotal role of



On behalf of the Department of Nutrition, Dr Cloupas Mahopo, the Lactation Management Coordinator, extended sincere gratitude to the Department of Health, Vhembe District representatives for their precious collaboration and unwavering support in orchestrating this workshop, which has undoubtedly been a resounding success and profoundly enriching experience for our students. Their steadfast dedication to enhancing maternal and child health outcomes is commendable and serves as a beacon of inspiration for all of us.



Professor Pascal Bessong (standing in the middle)

Professor Pascal Bessong honoured for outstanding scientific contribution to health research in the country

The Research Professor in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Professor Pascal Bessong, has been honoured for his outstanding contribution in lifting health research in South Africa. Prof Bessong received the Gold Merit award at the 10th South African Medical Research Council Merit Awards in Cape Town on 07 March 2024.

Gold medals are awarded annually to established senior scientists who have made seminal scientific contributions that have impacted on the health of people, especially those living in developing countries.

Since joining the University of Venda, Professor Bessong has initiated and built enduring facilities for excellence in research, community engagement, and human capital development, thus advancing the research culture at the University. For example, he established the AIDS Virus Research Laboratory, the HIV/AIDS & Global Health Research Programme, and in 2022 he founded the SAMRC-UNIVEN Antimicrobial Re-

sistance and Global Health Research Unit.

Professor Bessong has competitively attracted over R80 million through these research activities for research projects, laboratory equipment infrastructure, and student training. Over the years, his endeavours have provided contract jobs to over thirty individuals recruited from the communities engaged in the co-production of knowledge, thus making a direct impact on the livelihoods of these individuals. He currently leads a team of national and international investigators in seeking solutions to the challenges posed by antimicrobial resistance at the community level.

Professor Bessong trained as a Virologist in South Africa, France, and the United States of America. He is an elected member of the Academy of Science of South Africa, and a member of the Limpopo Department of Health Infection Prevention and Control Committee.

A prolific scientist: Professor Masello delivers a fascinating inaugural lecture



Prof Juan Masello, the newly appointed Adjunct Professor at the Department of Biological Sciences within the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture delivered his Inaugural Lecture on Tuesday, 12 March 2024 in the Life Sciences and Chemistry Building.

Prof Masello is a prolific scientist who has published over 100 peer-reviewed papers and with an H-index of 40. He is considered a scientist of considerable international standing. Presently he is based at the University of Bielefeld in Germany, where he lives with his family. However, Prof Masello makes regular yearly visits to the University of Venda where he collaborates with the Department of Biological Sciences.

His Inaugural Lecture was a fascinating tour of his past and present research on the behaviour of birds of the Southern Hemisphere. From his talk it was clear that his work has taken him to many interesting places in some of the most remote corners of the world. He has worked on many species of birds

over his career, including the burrowing parrots of South America, the prions of the Falkland Islands and the penguins of Antarctica.

Prof Masello is focussed on the mechanisms behind why birds behave in the way they do. His work therefore comprises long periods in the field where he tracks bird movements and observes and records data. He then follows this up with long periods in the laboratory analysing the data to tease out the signatures of underlying mechanisms. He entertained the audience with fascinating stories of his research adventures, including the fact that penguins can dive down to over 200 metres below the sea, and at that depth they hunt for fish and other animals.

Prof Masello is a close collaborator of Prof Yoshan Moodley in the Department of Biological Sciences and they have worked on many projects together. Prof Moodley was instrumental in bringing a population genetics dimension to the work of Prof Masello. Their long-standing collaboration has resulted in several high-profile papers, including the detection of a rare hybrid species, and further insights into the evolutionary biology of birds. In future publications, Prof Masello will include the University of Venda as one of his affiliations, further enhancing the research profile of the Department of Biological Sciences, the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture and the university itself.



Prof Yoshan Moodley (left in blue and white Golf shirt)

Standard Bank partners with UNIVEN and other stakeholders to upskill small business owners

SMMEs constitute 98% South Africa's businesses, driving the townships and villages' economy which employs 50% to 60% of the workforce, significantly contributing to the country's economy. It is for this reason that from 11-14 March 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) has partnered with standard Bank Business and other stakeholders to empower businesses based in Vhembe district with an Entrepreneurial Seminar. The Entrepreneurship Seminar that was held at Nandoni Riverview was organised to empower owners of SMMEs based in the Vhembe region.

Standard Bank's Head: Local Market for Tzaneen Area, Mrs Carol Demana-Kharidzha said she hopes that business owners who were in attendance found these seminars to be insightful, informative, and empowering and that they will use these important insights and skills to grow their businesses.

Another purpose of this seminar was to bring together various businesspeople under one roof to learn from one another and to create network of business people in the region. This seminar has attracted stakeholders such as Limpopo Department of Tourism, Limpopo Department of Treasury, the NYDA and Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Thulamela Municipality, and other stakeholders.



Standard Bank's Head: Local Market for Tzaneen Area, Mrs Carol Demana-Kharidzha



UNIVEN Celebrates Library Week physically for the first time since 2020



On Wednesday, 20 March 2024, Library Services held an event to celebrate the 2024 Library Week. This celebration was held at the University's Library Foyer.



Director Library Services, Mrs Mushoni Mulaudzi said it is important to celebrate the 2024 South African Library Week which is on the calendar of libraries to reflect on the contribution libraries make to society. She said the theme for the 2024 Library Week is 'Libraries Foster Social cohesion' – "I like the description of social cohesion that is provided by ChatGPT, which describes social cohesion as a concept that encompasses the bonds that tie the people together, thus fostering a sense of belonging and mutual trust." Mrs Mulaudzi continued to express that this concept speaks about issues such as inclusion, unity, solidarity, and integration.

"The Library and Information Association of South Africa has identified four ways in which libraries foster social cohesion." These being inclusivity, support for sustainable development goals including SDG 4, support for education, and provision of information technology services to bridge the digital divide.



As the Keynote speaker, Dr Dzivhonzile Sinthumule said libraries are the pillars of knowledge. "In today's interconnected world, addressing complex societal challenges requires collaborative efforts across various sectors. Traditionally libraries were known as collection of books, manuscripts, journals, and other reading materials housed in one space. Presently, libraries do not necessarily have to be a building since they are in transition from traditional to digital." Dr Sinthumule continued to express that libraries must promote access to information for all communities. "We need to reach out and be able to conduct activities within our communities. We need to share the knowledge that we have with our communities."

He continued to say that libraries should also remind us about critical and important historical events that have happened such as Human Rights Day and why it is celebrated. "The mission of libraries is to promote access to information, recreation, and learning to our communities despite the geographical, social, religious, or cultural limitations. The growth, success and development of our communities depends on the availability, accessibility and the quality of information provided in the libraries. So, libraries play a vital role in our communities."

He expressed concern about the shortage of libraries in our communities. "Libraries should be able to assist us solve our challenges. Libraries should not only be visited during examinations. We need to normalise using libraries to access information and to read for pleasure. Libraries empower people

with knowledge necessary for the economic growth of countries. This may assist to reduce job scarcity. Libraries cannot operate in isolation. They need to establish partnerships with internal and external stakeholders. Each community should have a library. Our primary and secondary schools should also be equipped with libraries."



Mr Aubrey Monyemorathwe gave a word of support on behalf of community libraries. He encouraged Librarians to contribute to the development and growth of ideas within our communities.



Ms Rachel Malatjie from Vhembe District Library, Department of Sports Arts and Culture thanked UNIVEN Librarians for always being available to assist community libraries within Vhembe District.



Mr Mpho Mogale, representing Khubvi Modular Library, Vhembe District, Department of Sports Arts and Culture also gave a message of support. He said libraries are playing a huge role in availing information to our communities.



Dr Anna Matodzi, Head of References gave a vote of thanks.

A Memorandum of Understanding to boost financially needy students and upskill UNIVEN staff, students and surrounding communities



On Monday, 11 March 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA). The signing ceremony took place at the University's Research Conference Centre. The signed MoU will assist the two parties collaborating to implement skills development initiatives in the mining and mineral sector. This will assist both UNIVEN academic staff and students.

Prior to the signing ceremony of this MoU, a meeting was held between UNIVEN and MQA. The two parties agreed in principle to enter into a partnership agreement. They further agreed to work together for purposes of collaboration in activities and/or interventions for implementation of skills development in line with relevant pre-conditions including the MQA's Funding Policy. The parties also agreed to cooperate and collaborate in Learning Programmes, Research Partnerships and Community Development areas. Learning programmes will include bursaries, lecturer support, learner support programmes, placement of bursars for work integrated learning, graduates work placement and career guidance while research partnerships will be based on different in-

dustrial sectors on skill development, mentorship and coaching including postgraduate and staff projects. On Community Development, the collaboration will be based on youth development programmes and small business support in the area of entrepreneurship and special courses on entrepreneurial activities and skills.

UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni was delighted about the signing of this MoU as it will assist academic staff, students, and the surrounding communities. Prof Nthambeleni assured MQA delegation led by the CEO, Dr Thabo Moshongoane that UNIVEN will make sure that this MoU and collaboration becomes a success.

When giving the background of MQA, CEO, Dr Thabo Moshongoane expressed that this MoU will assist UNIVEN staff and students with more than bursaries and lecturers' support. "MQA exists to serve universities such as UNIVEN," he said. Amongst other things, Dr Moshongoane spoke about track record in support of UNIVEN students. He further explained the way the MQA bursary scheme operates, including the application process and selection criteria. "We always do our level

best to assist institutions of higher learning," he concluded.

Senior Manager: Strategic Projects, Ms Zodwa Mashinini spoke about learning programmes and strategic projects where she highlighted the historical partnership between UNIVEN and MQA (HEI Lecturer Support) before the signing of the MoU. She indicated that the MQA learnerships and internships can fund up to R9000 per month per learner for a period of two years. This is to assist graduates to gain experience in their fields. She said these interns are placed at various universities and those doing Geology can be placed at various mining companies.



Senior Manager: Limpopo, Northern Cape and Gauteng, Ms Bridget Mathebula unpacked MQA Community Development Projects



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science Engineering and Agriculture, Prof Natasha Potgieter presented the brief overview of the institution (UNIVEN) including the strategic priorities. She briefed the delegation about the number of students and Lecturer support in her Faculty funded by MQA



The UNIVEN CFO, Mr Botwe Kraziya presented the overview of the current Financial Aid and bursary programmes at UNIVEN and further highlighted specific challenges and opportunities related to student financial support. He said some of the opportunities related to student financial support include small business support through the UNIVEN Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation.



Aspiring Entrepreneurs & Small Business Owners Gain Valuable Skills at the Inspire-Her Seminar

On 15 March 2024, the UNIVEN Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation (UCfERI) held Inspire-Her Seminar.

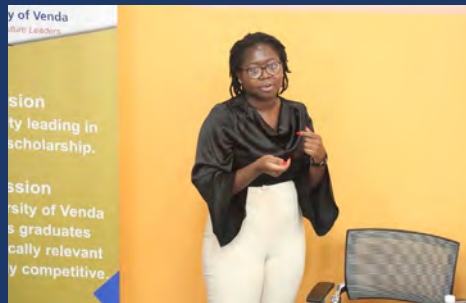


This Seminar, held at the UCfERI Auditorium, proved to be a transformative event, leaving attendees inspired and equipped with valuable insights to navigate the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship. The seminar served as a catalyst for change, fostering a culture of inclusivity, empowerment, and innovation within the UNIVEN community and surrounding community members.

When speaking about empowering change and inclusivity through personal narratives, Ms Lufuno Rasoesoe who is the Founder of Tosh Detergents, informed the attendees to watch seminars of motivational speakers more often if they want to do well in the entrepreneurship field. She told attendees that watching these motivational speakers will further help them to become successful in their businesses and overcome challenges in this field. "Have a support structure and always learn to listen and interpret what you have heard. Select only things that will build you. Be flexible to new ideas and innovations. Attend lot of trainings and always comply in your business dealing." She continued to tell them that, compliance will help them to succeed in business.

"Do it right from the beginning, it will help you to grow your businesses. Treat people right, those people will open doors for you. Marketing is the key in business, do it right and do it excellently. It also sets you apart in business. Never copy what the other person is doing. Do your own things in your own way. Have passion in what you do, it will take you to where you want to be. Associate yourselves with people who are in the same journey with you," she said.

Ms Tsakani Nyoni spoke about the importance of impact investment in the growth of sustainable ventures. She told attendees that in business there are lot of challenges especially access to funds to start or boost their businesses however they must keep pushing. "Brand yourselves". There should always be something that sets you apart from others who are doing the same business. Ms Nyoni



taught them about the processes of applying for funding and also highlighted the importance of conducting customer discovery interviews as this will help one set their business apart. "Be able to position yourself to do better than your competitors. Find a unique innovative way of selling your products or services."

Ms Azwianewi Marindili who is a Published Author, spoke about Navigating Entrepreneurial Success. She further spoke about the insights of content creation. "Let the success of other people inspire you and not intimidate you. Every business comes as a solution to address the challenge/problem." Ms. A. Marindili shared her entrepreneurial journey with the audience, emphasizing how her upbringing significantly influenced her path. Drawing from her experience managing her mother's street vendor business, she highlighted that no life experience is without value. This perspective and her childhood trauma led her to venture into writing and content creation. Ms. Marindili encouraged everyone, recognizing that each person, created in the image of the Creator, possesses inherent creativity and has something unique to contribute to the world. She emphasized that the government's contributions towards unemployment are limited, and that individual responsibility lies in discovering their unique gifts and using them to address the country's challenges. "Transforming the gift into a revenue stream becomes our business", she said.

She urged the audience to embrace their inner callings (the thing they feel led to do), regardless of how daunting or seemingly insignificant they may appear. Sometimes, it's those very steps that pave the way for unexpected opportunities. Her parting words echoed the wisdom of the proverb: "A man's gift opens doors for him, and brings him before great men."

Mr Sheperd Muluvhu from Zone Incorporations highlighted some business advises on accounting and taxation for small businesses. He advised them to comply with all affiliated bodies and to al-



ways seek financial advice as small businesses are always handling monies.



Mr Muluvhu's presentation focused on: Financial Management, Compliance with Legal Requirements, Financial Planning & Budgeting, Business Performance Evaluation and lastly Decision Making, providing a comprehensive overview of essential topics crucial for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Overall, Mr. Muluvhu's presentation provided attendees with invaluable insights and practical advice to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the competitive business landscape. His expertise in the above key areas in any business serves as a guiding light for aspiring entrepreneurs on their journey to success.

Ms Rasoesoe, Ms Nyoni, Ms Marindili, Mr Munyai and Doreen Morukhu were part of panellists who are influential leaders and experts from diverse fields to discussing and addressing the challenges and opportunities for women in the world of business. Their stories of resilience, creativity, and determination served as powerful reminders of the limitless potential within each individual to create positive change and make meaningful contributions to society, especially female entrepreneurs.

Department of Science and Innovation's Technology Innovation Agency (DSI_TIA) support research work towards production of efficient biogas at UNIVEN



In a series of site visits, the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) visited the University of Venda (UNIVEN) to inspect the research work they have supported since 2023. Together with three other universities, the University of Venda is supported by the Department of Science and Innovation's Technology Innovation Agency (DSI/TIA) for research work towards production of efficient biogas. The Biogas Consortium was initiated by Professor Tonderayi Matambo from University of South Africa who then collaborated with University of Fort Hare, University of Zululand, and the University of Venda. The consortium culminated into a Center of Competence in Environmental Biotechnology (CoCEB) between the four Universities headed by UNISA.

Ms Pamella Ntshakaza from TIA manages industrial biotechnology initiatives. She recently visited UNIVEN to inspect the progress of the biogas initiative towards production meant for use in rural areas where there is greater need. Before holding a discussion with staff and students involved in the project, Ms Ntshakaza visited Dzwerani village where one of the functional biodigester producing biogas is situated. She was impressed by the progress and feedback from the community. Dr Vhutshilo Nekhubvi from Department of Physics who manages the technicalities of the biogas production explained to Ms Ntshakaza the need for further support to the community working closely with UNIVEN for the greater good of the same community of Dzwerani and the surrounding areas. The discussion has led to the point where she has suggested that UNIVEN should consider having a house at Dzwerani to be one of the green sustainable households to showcase the work which is done by the UNIVEN on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

In further discussion with staff and students, Ms Ntshakaza mentioned that it is important to ensure that both staff and students are performing their tasks towards the same goal.

Dr Lutendo Mathomu from Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology gave a breakdown of the progress since inception in 2023. The project already graduated two Honours students and aims to further graduate a PhD, three Masters, and a few more Honours students by 2026. Research papers and prototypes are also on the cards before the end of the project.

Prof Eric Maluta from Center of Excellence in Renewable Energy Research (UNIVEN CoERER) gave a word of appreciation to DSI/TIA before thanking everyone involved in the project.

"We would like to appreciate the support we get from the Executive Dean Faculty of Science Engineering and Agriculture and the Deputy Dean Research and Teaching and Learning. Our strength on the project is driven by the three students, Ms Takalani Nethavhanani, Ms Edna Phaphana and Ms Tendani Matamela who have enrolled for PhD and MSc respectively, in this project," said Prof Maluta.



Ms Pamella Ntshakaza from TIA manages industrial biotechnology initiatives



Dr Lutendo Mathomu from Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology

Long-Awaited Chinese Classes at UNIVEN Finally Kicked-Off



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (3rd from left) poses for a photo with Chinese staff and Dr Segun Obadire (2nd from right)

"In 6 months, I will be fluent. I will be a Chinese," said Kaevin Mapila (马开文), a student from the newly opened Chinese language class by Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI), the collaboration programme between the University of Venda and Hubei University of Technology in China.



The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) of the joint programme was signed in August 2023 during the Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to South Africa, and the joint programme proudly displayed itself on Xi's South Africa state visit achievement list. On 05 December 2023, UNIVEN held a grand plaque unveiling ceremony for GTCI and the joint programme was officially launched. On 28 February 2024, the Co-Director of GTCI, Prof Grace Ge together with three lecturers, arrived at UNIVEN, and thus symbolising the official operation of GTCI.

On 18 March 2024, after two weeks of preparation, the Chinese language classes at GTCI were officially kick-started. In a survey conducted by the International Relations and Partnerships Directorate, both students and staff at UNIVEN showed great interest in learning the Chinese lessons. Altogether, a total number of 2931 students and staff applied and showed keen interest in the Chinese classes. GTCI has finally registered 320 participants in 14 groups. The classes are attended from Monday to Saturday with each group having a different schedule. Students will attend 40 hours of teaching per first semester and upon graduation, students will receive a certification in Chinese language. Students who passed will then be afforded an opportunity to further learning the language with more advanced courses.

Prof Grace GE, the Co-Director of GTCI, stated that this initiative is currently accommodating UNIVEN staff and students, and it will be extended to the local communities and other institutions at a later stage. In future the Institute is also

planning to offer online courses to benefit those who are far from UNIVEN.

The UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, recently visited the Chinese language classes at GTCI and was impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the students. He noted that learning Chinese is an important step towards becoming future leaders in a globalized world.



Addressing the Global Epidemic: The Significance of World Obesity Day

The University of Venda's Faculty of Health Sciences, in partnership with the African Centre for Obesity Prevention (ACTION), the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)/ Witwatersrand (Wits) Developmental Pathways for Health Research Unit (DPHRU), and the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence (CoE) in human development recently hosted the World Obesity Day Webinar. Experts, professionals, and community members came together to share knowledge and experiences regarding the health burden of obesity and addressed the pressing issues surrounding obesity.

As a follow-up of the World Obesity Day Webinar to unpack and learn more about Obesity burden, the UNIVEN Nendila Newsletter team had a chat with Dr Gudani Mukoma, who is a Lecturer in the Department of Biokinetics, Recreation and Sports Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, UNIVEN.

Dr Mukoma shared with the team the importance of observing World Obesity Day. Take a look at what he said, "World Obesity Day, observed annually on the 4th of March serves as a critical reminder of the urgent need to address the global health crisis of obesity. This day is not only about raising awareness but also promoting concerted efforts to combat this multifaceted issue. From advocating for policy changes to empowering individuals to make healthier choices. World Obesity Day plays a pivotal role in driving positive change worldwide."

In his remarks, Dr Mukoma outlined the following key purposes of World Obesity Day:

- **Raising Awareness:** World Obesity Day aims to increase public awareness and understanding of obesity as a multifaceted health issue with significant consequences for individuals and societies.
- **Combat Stigma and Discrimination:** The day seeks to challenge societal stigmas and discrimination associated with obesity, fostering empathy, and understanding for those affected.
- **Promote Prevention and Treatment:** World Obesity Day emphasises the importance of preventive measures and effective treatment strategies. This includes encouraging healthier lifestyles, promoting balanced diets, and advocating for increased physical activity.
- **Advocate for Policy Changes:** The day provides a platform to advocate for policy changes at the local, national, and international levels to create environments that support healthy living and prevent obesity.
- **Global Collaboration:** World Obesity Day encourages collaboration among healthcare professionals, policymakers, researchers, and the public to address obesity collectively. It serves as an opportunity for organisations and individuals worldwide to unite in the fight against obesity.
- **Highlight the Health Impacts:** By focusing attention on the health consequences of obesity, World Obesity Day underscores the importance of addressing this issue to reduce the burden of associated diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular problems, and certain cancers.
- **Empower Individuals:** The day empowers individuals to take control of their health and make informed choices regarding their diet, physical activity, and overall well-being.
- **Educate the Public:** World Obesity Day serves as an educational platform, providing information and resources to the public about the causes, risks, and potential solutions related to obesity.

When is a person considered to be obese?

Obesity is a medical condition characterized by the excessive accumulation of body fat to the extent that it may have a harmful effect on health. It is typically determined by calculating the body mass index (BMI), which considers a person's weight in relation to their height. Generally, a BMI of 30 or above is considered indicative of obesity. This condition arises from a complex interplay/interaction of genetic, environmental, and behavioural factors, leading to an imbalance be-

tween calorie intake and expenditure.

What is the cause of obesity? Is it an overeating problem?

Obesity is a complex condition influenced by various factors, and its impact on a person's well-being is extreme. Several causes contribute to the development of obesity and understanding them is crucial for addressing and managing this health issue.

- **Unhealthy Diet:** Consuming a diet high in calories, especially from processed and fast foods, sugary beverages, and snacks, can lead to weight gain.
- **Lack of Physical Activity:** Sedentary lifestyles, characterised by a lack of regular physical activity, contribute significantly to obesity. Insufficient exercise disrupts the balance between calorie intake and expenditure.
- **Genetics:** Genetic factors can play a role in putting individuals at risk of obesity. Certain genetic conditions, such as Ahlstrom syndrome and family history, may increase vulnerability.
- **Environmental Factors:** Living in environments that lack access to nutritious food options or opportunities for physical activity can contribute to obesity.
- **Psychological Factors:** Emotional and psychological factors, such as stress, depression, and trauma, may lead to unhealthy eating habits and sedentary behaviours, contributing to weight gain.
- **Medical Conditions:** Some medical conditions and medications can lead to weight gain or make weight management challenging (this includes pregnancy).
- **Lack of Sleep:** Inadequate sleep can disrupt hormonal balance, affecting appetite regulation and potentially leading to weight gain.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Individuals with lower socioeconomic status may face challenges accessing healthy food options and engaging in regular physical activity.

What are the challenges and consequences of obesity?

Obesity is associated with various health risks, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, certain cancers, and musculoskeletal issues, and it can have significant implications for an individual's overall well-being and quality of life.

Impact on Wellbeing:

- **Physical Health:** Obesity is associated with various health issues, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, musculoskeletal problems, and an increased risk of certain cancers.
- **Mental Health:** Obesity can contribute to mental health issues, such as low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety, often exacerbated by societal stigmas and discrimination.
- **Quality of Life:** Reduced mobility, increased fatigue, and chronic health conditions associated with obesity can significantly impact an individual's overall quality of life.
- **Social Implications:** Obese individuals may face social challenges, including stigmatization and discrimination, which can lead to social isolation and negatively affect mental health.
- **Financial Impact:** Managing the healthcare costs associated with obesity-related conditions places a considerable financial burden on individuals and healthcare systems.

What are the most appropriate solutions for combating obesity?

Addressing obesity involves a multifaceted/many-sided approach, encompassing lifestyle modifications, behavioural changes (dietary and physical activity changes), and supportive environments to promote overall well-being and reduce the risk of associated



health problems and, in some cases, medical interventions.

The University community can seamlessly incorporate practical examples into their demanding work and study schedules to promote physical activity and movement through the following strategies:

- **Active Commuting:** Encourage walking, cycling, or using stairs for commuting to and within the university campus.
- **Desk Exercises:** Promote short exercise routines or stretches that can be done at desks or workstations to combat sedentary periods.
- **Walking Meetings:** Encourage conducting meetings while walking, either outdoors or within designated campus areas, to combine physical activity with productivity.
- **Scheduled Breaks:** Advocate for regular breaks during study or work hours, encouraging individuals to engage in brief physical activities, such as stretching or walking.
- **Fitness Classes and Facilities:** Provide access to on-campus fitness classes or facilities to make it convenient for the university community to engage in structured physical activities.
- **Incorporate Movement in Learning:** Explore teaching methods that involve physical activity, such as interactive group activities, standing discussions, or incorporating movement into lectures.
- **Outdoor Study Spaces:** Designate outdoor areas with seating and Wi-Fi access, creating spaces where students and staff can work or study while enjoying fresh air and physical movement.
- **Wellness Programmes:** Implement wellness programmes that include physical activity challenges, workshops, or group activities to foster a sense of community engagement.
- **Promote Recreational Sports:** Support and promote recreational sports leagues or clubs on campus, encouraging participation in team sports or individual physical activities.
- **Fitness Challenges and Competitions:** Organise friendly fitness challenges or competitions among departments or student groups to motivate individuals to incorporate physical activity into their routines.
- **Accessible Exercise Facilities:** Ensure that exercise facilities are easily accessible and equipped with a variety of equipment to cater to different preferences and fitness levels.
- **Active Study Breaks:** Encourage students to take active study breaks by engaging in short bursts of physical activity, such as jumping jacks, yoga stretches, or a quick walk.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Run awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of regular physical activity and providing tips for incorporating movement into daily routines.

Addressing the Global Epidemic: The Significance of World Obesity Day...continued

By integrating these practical examples, the University community can create an environment that promotes a healthy and active lifestyle, ultimately enhancing overall well-being and academic performance.

Is obesity a life-threatening condition?

Yes, obesity can indeed be a life-threatening condition. It is associated with numerous serious health risks and can significantly increase the likelihood of developing various chronic diseases, including:

- **Heart disease:** Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease, including coronary artery disease, heart attacks, and heart failure.

- **Type 2 diabetes:** Obesity is closely linked with insulin resistance and the development of type 2 diabetes, a condition that can lead to serious complications such as cardiovascular disease, kidney failure, and blindness.

- **Hypertension (high blood pressure):** Obesity is a significant risk factor for hypertension, which increases the risk of stroke, heart attack, and other cardiovascular complications.

- **Stroke:** Obesity increases the risk of ischemic stroke, which occurs when a blood vessel supplying blood to the brain is blocked.

- **Certain cancers:** Obesity is associated with an increased risk of several types of cancer, including breast, colon, prostate, ovarian, and pancreatic cancer.

- **Sleep apnea:** Obesity is a leading cause of obstructive sleep apnea, a condition characterized by pauses in breathing during sleep, which can lead to daytime fatigue and an increased risk of cardiovascular problems.

- **Liver disease:** Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is strongly associated with obesity and can progress to more severe conditions such as non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and liver cirrhosis.

- **Joint problems:** Excess weight puts additional stress on the joints, increasing the risk of osteoarthritis and other joint-related issues.

- **Psychological effects:** Obesity can also have psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

- **Reduced life expectancy:** Overall, obesity is associated with a shorter life expectancy compared to individuals with a healthy weight.

What advice can you give to a person who is already obese?

If someone is already obese, it is important for them to take steps to improve their health and well-being. Here are some pieces of advice that can help:

- **Consult with a healthcare professional:** Start by

consulting with a healthcare provider who can provide personalized advice based on your health status, medical history, and individual needs. They can also help you set realistic goals for weight loss and offer support and guidance throughout your journey.

- **Focus on gradual, sustainable changes:** Instead of trying to make drastic changes all at once, focus on making small, sustainable changes to your diet and lifestyle. This could include gradually increasing physical activity, reducing portion sizes, and making healthier food choices.

- **Eat a balanced diet:** Aim to eat a balanced diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Limit your intake of processed foods, sugary beverages, and high-fat foods.

- **Watch portion sizes:** Be mindful of portion sizes, as consuming large portions can contribute to weight gain. Use smaller plates and bowls and pay attention to hunger and fullness cues to avoid overeating.

- **Stay active:** Incorporate regular physical activity into your daily routine. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, such as brisk walking, cycling, swimming, or dancing. Find activities that you enjoy and make them a regular part of your routine.

- **Set realistic goals:** Set achievable goals for weight loss and focus on making progress over time. Remember that slow and steady weight loss is more sustainable in the long term.

- **Seek support:** Surround yourself with supportive friends, family members, or a support group who can encourage and motivate you on your journey. Consider joining a weight loss programme or working with a dietitian or personal trainer for additional support.

- **Address emotional eating:** If you tend to eat in response to emotions or stress, find healthier ways to cope with these feelings, such as practising mindfulness, engaging in relaxation techniques, or seeking support from a therapist.

- **Track your progress:** Keep track of your food intake, physical activity, and progress toward your goals. This can help you stay accountable and identify areas for improvement.

- **Be patient and kind to yourself:** Remember that weight loss takes time and effort, and it is normal to experience setbacks along the way. Be patient with yourself and celebrate your progress, no matter how small.

As Nendila Newsletter team wraps up the interview, Dr Mukoma shared some of the Key facts around obesity and overweight from WHO.

- In 2022, 1 in 8 people in the world were living with obesity.

- Worldwide adult obesity has more than doubled since 1990, and adolescent obesity has quadrupled.

- In 2022, 2.5 billion adults (18 years and older) were overweight. Of these, 890 million were living with obesity.

- In 2022, 43% of adults aged 18 years and over were overweight, and 16% were living with obesity.

- In 2022, 37 million children under the age of 5 were overweight.

Over 390 million children and adolescents aged 5–19 years were overweight in 2022, including 160 million who were living with obesity.

Dr Mukoma extends his heartfelt wishes for everyone's lifelong health and vitality. He emphasizes, "Do not turn a blind eye to obesity," because it can impact individuals of all ages.

The Nendila team would like to appreciate Dr Mukoma's time for sharing this important information with our readers.

We would like to hear from you!

Nendila is your communication channel.

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Tip Offs

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline

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Improper conduct includes the following:

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