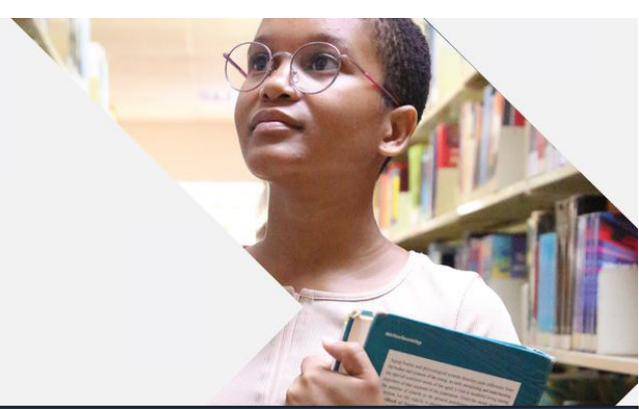




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

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Remembering the Power of Indigenous Languages: University of Venda Commemorates International Mother Tongue Day



L-R: Panellists - Lecturers from the Department of African Languages, Ms Nontokozo Mdhuli, Ms Pearl Kabini, Mr Maropeng Maponya, Dr Hlengiwe Mashela, Dr Avhatakali Makhado, Dr Peter Makhado and Prof Mkhachani Chauke

The University of Venda (UNIVEN), in collaboration with the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRL) recently hosted a memorable celebration for International Mother Tongue Day under the theme 'Make Language Count for Sustainable Development.' The event that took place at UNIVEN's Research Conference Centre focused on the important role of language preservation in safeguarding cultural heritage, improving educational outcomes, and fostering more peaceful and sustainable societies.



As the keynote speaker, Deputy Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education at the University of Venda, Prof Pfarelo Matshidze reflected on the theme, 'We are commemorating our languages for sustainable development,' highlighting that

the Constitution empowers us to preserve and recognise our indigenous languages. Prof Matshidze encouraged an interactive discussion, asking students how the Constitution empowers the celebration of languages.

She alluded to Section 6 of the South African Constitution, which supports the use of official languages, including sign language, in private and public spheres. The Constitution's provisions also ensure the right to use one's mother tongue in the workplace and public services. Section 29 emphasises the importance of education in a language of choice, especially during early schooling, to improve cognitive skills and academic success.

Prof Matshidze continued to highlight that making education available in people's mother tongues may improve learning results. She said teaching students in a language they can comprehend results in higher literacy rates and stronger workforce skills. "It increases the likelihood that they will succeed academically and enables the community to participate in educational processes in more meaningful ways. Children learn more effectively when they are instructed in their mother tongue. Children who can learn in a language they are fluent in do better academically. Multilingual education systems that incorporate local or indigenous languages alongside dominant languages enhance literacy, numeracy, and general cognitive skills. Higher educational attainment, improved learning outcomes, and more inclusive educational systems are the results of this." She also mentioned ways in which the mother tongue can be preserved. "This can be done by creating online dictionaries, grammar materials, and word lists as well as digital archives or databases of the language. Both speakers and learners may find it easier to access and study the language with the aid of these tools. They should also create dynamic mobile applications for language learning that include lessons, games, and quizzes to teach Indigenous languages. These applications can assist language learners."

She concluded her talk by calling for collective responsibility to ensure that Indigenous languages are celebrated, preserved, and integrated into all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and public services, to foster equality and cultural pride.



In his opening and welcome remarks, the Manager for the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education at UNIVEN, Dr Mafemani Joseph Baloyi opened the event by highlighting the importance of multilingual education in promoting cultural and social development. He emphasised Africans take pride in their linguistic diversity, with five major languages being taught at UNIVEN, being IsiNdebele, Northern Sotho, Siswati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga, the promotion of these languages must go beyond theoretical discussions, urging practical steps to prioritise language development. "We cannot rely on others to develop our languages," he said. "It is our responsibility to ensure that our languages thrive for future generations."

Dr. Baloyi also referenced the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's 1999 resolution to declare 21st February as International Mother Tongue Day to honour the martyrs who lost their lives in the fight for language rights in 1952. He further called for formalised partnerships between the University of Venda and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities, urging both institutions to collaborate in implementing strategies for the development of Indigenous languages.



When talking about the purpose of the commemoration event, the Head of the Department of African Languages in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education at the University of Venda, Dr. Matodzi Raphalalani reinforced the idea that language is much more than just a means of communication; it is the cornerstone of identity, heritage, and unity. “Without language, culture fades, and with it, a part of our humanity,” she remarked. Dr Raphalalani emphasised that this celebration was not just about recognising languages but also taking action to preserve them for future generations.

The event highlighted the crucial role that young people play in the survival of their mother tongues. In the age of technology, students have the unique opportunity to promote indigenous languages through social media, digital tools, and creative industries. Dr Raphalalani challenged the audience to reflect on how they could contribute to the preservation of their languages, both within the academic sphere and beyond.



Dr Avhashoni Tsanwani from the CRL Rights Commission, passionately spoke about the

importance of protecting and promoting cultural, religious, and linguistic rights in South Africa. As part of a constitutional body aimed at fostering equality and non-discrimination, CRL works to ensure that diverse cultures and languages are respected and embraced. Dr Tsanwani’s encouraged the audience to take pride in their languages and encourage them to use these languages at their homes, in schools and in public environments. She shared the commission’s objectives to promote peace, tolerance, and national unity across cultural and linguistic divides, underscoring the need for a society where every language is respected equally. Reflecting on the importance of language as a cultural heritage, Dr Tsanwani spoke with pride about her own (Tshivenda) heritage and encouraged the audience to value and cherish their languages.

The gathering was a powerful reminder that language is not just a tool for communication, but an essential part of cultural identity and societal well-being. The day’s discussions sparked a renewed sense of commitment among participants to preserve and promote their mother tongues. From educational institutions to government bodies and community organisations, the future of Indigenous languages depends on collective action and pride in one’s heritage. As the event ended, attendees were left with a renewed sense of responsibility to take active steps in language preservation—ensuring that Indigenous languages are celebrated not only on International Mother Tongue Day but every day, across all sectors of society.

The International Mother Tongue Day celebration at the University of Venda was more than just a ceremonial event; it was a clarion call for action. By embracing our languages, we are safeguarding our cultural identities, ensuring educational success, and fostering a more inclusive, sustainable future for generations to come. Let’s keep the conversation going—because language truly does count for sustainable development.

During the event, various language specialists from the University of Venda (UNIVEN) took the opportunity to emphasise the crucial role of language in shaping cultural identity, communication, and academic success. They highlighted how language serves as a bridge for knowledge transmission, both within communities and academic settings. The specialists stressed that preserving indigenous languages is not just a cultural necessity but also an educational imperative. They pointed out that students who are taught in their mother tongue demonstrate improved cognitive development and academic performance. Furthermore, they discussed the importance of linguistic diversity in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society, where all languages are valued and promoted. Their collective message underscored that language is not only a tool for communication but also a vital means of preserving history, culture, and heritage for future generations.

Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Dr Tshinetise Raphalalani expressed his gratitude to Prof Matshidze for her insightful and thought-provoking presentation. He thanked her for emphasising the importance of preserving and promoting Indigenous languages through the framework provided by the Constitution. Dr Raphalalani highlighted the value of the discussions, and the collective effort required to continue preserving languages, not just on special occasions like International Mother Tongue Day, but throughout the year. He also reiterated that language is integral to cultural identity and societal well-being. He encouraged the audience to actively participate in preserving and promoting their mother tongues, whether through education, media, or community efforts. Dr Raphalalani concluded by reaffirming that the celebration of languages is not just a reflection of our heritage but also a responsibility to future generations.



In his concluding remarks, A Senior Lecturer in the Department of African Languages, Faculty of

The audience at the Research Conference Centre

Breaking the Silence: Tackling Gender-Based Violence at the University of Venda

On Wednesday, 05 March 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Student Housing Unit under the Department of Student Affairs hosted a groundbreaking event titled 'Men's Talk' under the theme 'Myths about Gender-Based Violence'. Held at Riverside Residence, this event gathered over 30 attendees, including postgraduate students to engage in meaningful conversations aimed at debunking myths surrounding gender-based violence (GBV) and fostering a culture of respect and accountability.



On the Photo: Mr Thomani Ndwammbi, Riverside Residence Warden, University of Venda

Mr Thomani Ndwammbi, the Riverside Residence Warden, warmly welcomed attendees and highlighted the core purpose of the event which is to initiate discussions on gender-based violence. The session was aimed at raising awareness and encouraging active participation in combating GBV within the university community.



On the photo: Ms Valencia Maupye

Ms Valencia Maupye, Head of the newly established Transformation Office, took to the stage to outline the university's commitment to addressing GBV and femicide. She elaborated on the Transformation Office's advocacy work, which focuses on raising awareness, handling GBV complaints, and providing support for victims through a complainant-centred approach. The office also collects data on GBV cases to create relevant programmes that address these challenges effectively.

Ms Maupye explained that GBV is a harmful act driven by gender and affects everyone, though women and children remain the most vulnerable victims. Emphasising the importance of understanding consent, she highlighted that silence, or hesitation does not equate to consent. She dispelled several myths surrounding GBV, such as the notion that victims could easily leave abusive relationships or that GBV is limited to physical violence alone. Furthermore, Ms Maupye tackled the issue of toxic masculinity, urging men to seek help and support when needed. She also referred to the amended Sexual Offences Act (2021), which provides stronger protection for vulnerable groups, including female students under 25, and mandates reporting suspected sexual offences.



On the photo: Evangelist James Maladzhi: Social Worker: Department of Social Development

Evangelist James Maladzhi delivered an impactful speech, emphasising the crucial role that men play in addressing GBV. He discussed the importance of men gathering with the aim of making lasting decisions that drive change. Drawing attention to the issue of statutory rape, Maladzhi reminded men of the legal consequences of engaging with minors, stressing that individuals under 16 cannot legally consent. He also debunked myths such as the belief that sexual assault is predominantly committed by strangers, pointing out that most perpetrators are known to their victims, often family members or close acquaintances.

The pastor encouraged men to challenge gender stereotypes and respect women, urging them to confront harmful attitudes within their social circles. He concluded by stressing that change starts with each individual and that men must take responsibility for their actions, fostering a culture of respect and accountability.



On the photo: Mr Maanda Nemaxwi

Mr Maanda Nemaxwi from the University of Venda's Protection Service provided valuable insights into the challenges and efforts in addressing GBV on campus from a security perspective. He shared that security personnel had previously lacked the necessary training to handle GBV cases, often dealing with such issues after hours. However, the Protection Service is now working closely with other departments to improve its response. He highlighted alcohol abuse, particularly during weekends and events, as a significant factor contributing to GBV incidents, alongside intimidation through political affiliations and harmful cultural practices brought to the university by students.

Mr Nemaxwi also discussed the introduction of a referral system for managing GBV cases and the installation of security cameras in Riverside to enhance student safety. He underscored the importance of confidentiality and professionalism in handling GBV incidents and stressed the need for ongoing education, particularly for first-year students.



On the photo: Ms Maggie Hlungwani

Ms Maggie Hlungwani's talk focused on the severe health consequences of GBV, highlighting both physical and mental health issues that victims often experience. She discussed how GBV can lead to depression, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and an increased risk of suicide. She additionally warned participants about the physical health risks such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, unplanned pregnancies, infertility, and the adverse effects of alcohol and substance abuse.

Ms Hlungwani urged students to be cautious and respectful in their relationships, advocating for the use of contraceptives and condoms to prevent unintended consequences. She also emphasised the importance of seeking medical help and counselling following an experience of GBV, as untreated conditions can lead to long-term health problems.

The event highlighted the collective responsibility of students, staff, and the broader community in addressing GBV. Ms Hlungwani's message resonated with the attendees, encouraging them to actively participate in preventing and reporting GBV. She called for everyone to work together to foster a GBV-free environment on campus. Furthermore, she invited students to join the university's initiative as Gender-Based Violence Ambassadors, reinforcing the idea that both men and women should play an active role in creating a safer, more respectful university culture.

The Men's Talks event was a step forward in the university's ongoing efforts to combat gender-based violence, raising awareness and empowering students to act against



On the photo: Adv Thanyani Mphephu

Adv Thanyani Mphephu warned students, particularly young men, about the dangers and consequences of engaging in irresponsible relationships. He cautioned that participating in abusive or harmful behaviours could lead to serious legal repercussions, including imprisonment or expulsion from the university. Adv Mphephu also highlighted the ways in which manipulative behaviours can trap individuals in cases of GBV, emphasising the importance of controlling one's emotions and actions. He urged students to avoid risky situations, respect boundaries, and make responsible decisions that protect their futures.

such harmful behaviours. The discussions, led by key figures from various sectors, reinforced the importance of respect, accountability, and understanding in the fight to end GBV.



On the photo: attendees of the Men's Talk

UNIVEN ICT trains ICT staff members on Information Technology Infrastructure Library Foundation Version 4



On the 24 and 25 of February 2025, a total of 46 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) staff members, including student assistants and interns, were trained on Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Foundation Version 4. The training was made possible by the support of the Director ICT Services, Mr Sam Khoza. In his words, Mr Khoza mentioned that the University community needs the best ICT services, The training also ensured that we provide the best ICT services to the University business."



Dr. Nkhumbuleni Ratshitanga, Head ICT Support Services, facilitating the training

The Training was facilitated by Dr Nkhumbuleni Ratshitanga, Head of ICT Support Services, who is also competent in ITIL Foundation Ver 4 and has advanced knowledge of other ICT governance models.

The main objective of the training was to equip the ICT staff members with knowledge and skills that will help them to contribute positively towards enhancing Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) and performance in the ICT department, which in turn will enhance and sustain the alignment of Information Technology services with business needs. This training also enables the University to successfully navigate the complexities of the digital age. The specific objectives of the training were: To revitalise and enhance the IT staff's ITSM knowledge with an expectation that it would enhance their chances of passing ITIL 4 examinations and to introduce Information Technology student assistants and interns to ITIL Foundation Ver 4 with an expectation that it would enhance their chances of getting employment.

The ITIL4 Foundation framework also has the Service Value System (SVS), which guides how different components and activities within the institution can work together to create value. Key elements include the Guiding Principles, Governance, Service Value Chain, Practices, and Continual Improvement. The Guiding Principles promote flexibility, collaboration, and a focus on value,

while the Service Value Chain provides an operating model for creating, delivering, and continually improving services.

ITIL 4 is designed for Information Technology professionals at all levels, and it also covers key concepts such as the Four Dimensions of Service Management (organisations and people, information and technology, partners and suppliers, and value streams and processes) and the ITIL Management Practices. These practices are sets of organisational resources for performing work or achieving objectives.

It is envisaged that the attendees will ensure efficient and effective Information Technology services that are properly aligned with business goals. Attendees will also be given a certificate of attendance.

The ICT Department also thanked the organisers and the Marketing Branding and Communication Department for contributing to the success of the training.



If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline by calling toll free number 0800 212 755 or email: univenhotline@tip-offs.com

Improper conduct includes the following...

- 1. Financial misconduct,**
- 2. Misuse or misappropriation of University assets,**
- 3. Health and safety risks,**
- 4. Plagiarism,**
- 5. Fraud and corruption.**