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Empowering Women: UNIVEN Hosts Thought-Provoking Public Lecture



Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Honourable Mmapaseka "Steve" Letsike

On 8 August 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Department of Youth in Development, together with the Black Management Forum (BMF) Thohoyandou Branch, gathered at UNIVEN's Lecture Hall E1 for an insightful and thought-provoking Public Lecture delivered by Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Honourable Mmapaseka Steve Letsike.

This Public Lecture was held under the theme 'Women and Economic Empowerment: Building Financial Independence.'

When delivering the lecture, Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Honourable Mmapaseka "Steve" Letsike, spoke about women's economic empowerment. "When women earn, they

reinvest significantly in their children's education, household, nutrition, and well-being." Women's financial independence is not just about income, but about agency, power, and dignity, and it requires dismantling deep-seated structural barriers that obstruct women's economic participation.

"We must be intentional in our approach, in our actions that disrupt the status quo and place economic emancipation of women at the very heart of our national development agenda." She said collective action is necessary to support women's economic empowerment.

Honourable Letsike also told the audience that their circumstances and poverty should not determine their future. She shared her personal story of growing up without parents, but still achieving a lot, to show that with determination and hard work, anyone can overcome challenges and achieve greater things in life.

She concluded her lecture by mentioning that now it is time for women to take their rightful place in the economy.



Prof Tawanda Runhare, Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education

Prof Tawanda Runhare, the Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, welcomed guests and students to the Women's Day celebration Public Lecture. He stated that it is essential to promote female students' confidence to influence social change and empower them to make informed decisions about their future, while explaining that the university aims to produce graduates who are competitive both locally and internationally, guided by its Strategic Plan,

which includes youth empowerment. Prof Runhare stated that the university cannot claim victory while female students continue to face ongoing challenges related to economic transformation and gender-based violence. He also mentioned that "If you educate a woman, you educate the nation," highlighting the importance of focusing on female students' empowerment.



Prof Thizwilondi Mudau, Head of the Department of Youth in Development at UNIVEN

When giving the purpose of the day, Prof Thizwilondi Mudau, HoD of Youth in Development at UNIVEN, stated that the purpose of the gathering is to celebrate Women's Month, highlighting the challenges that are faced by women, such as rape and murder. The Department of Youth in Development, led by Prof. Mudau, organised this event to bring in speakers to discuss important issues affecting women, with the Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities present to share insights. She thanked Prof Runhare and BMF for their support of this event.



Mr Mpho Motsei, Black Management Forum (BMF) President

Mr Mpho Motsei, Black Management Forum (BMF) President, shared a personal story about his mother's struggles and sacrifices for him to be educated. He enlightened that his mother worked hard to support him, including selling food and working in factories, and made significant sacrifices to ensure he could access tertiary education. Mr Motsei stated that if his mother had been economically empowered, she would have made a significant impact in her community. He encouraged attendees to empower each other.



Dr Mafemani Baloyi, Manager of UNIVEN's Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

When proposing a vote of thanks, Dr Mafemani Baloyi expressed gratitude to various individuals and stakeholders who contributed to the success of this Public Lecture.

He appreciated the Deputy Minister, Honorable Mmapaseka Steve Letsike, for her humble and generous gesture when delivering the lecture. He also acknowledged students, staff members, the SRC President, BMF President, Acting Executive Dean, and the Vice-Chancellor while thanking them for their roles in making the event a success.



Deputy Minister, Honourable Mmapaseka "Steve" Letsike (third from right) poses with UNIVEN staff and BMF members



Some of the attendees of the Public Lecture

Save our Youth: UNIVEN at War Against Substance Abuse

The adage "prevention is better than cure" has always held significance when addressing the urgent need to protect our youth from the increasing threat of substance abuse that continues to plague our society. On 5 August 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Department of Arts and Social Sciences partnered with several University stakeholders, including the University's Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation,

Thohoyandou SAPS, Hayani Hospital, and the Team Makongoza Disciplinary Camp, to conduct an impactful educational tour that was organised to raise awareness among Ralson Tshinanne Secondary School learners about the dangers of substance abuse.

This strategic collaboration was aimed at creating a comprehensive educational experience, providing learners with accurate and relevant information from those who have encountered the harsh realities of substance abuse firsthand.



Representatives from Hayani Hospital took centre stage, engaging learners in discussions about the myriad factors that contribute to substance use, as well as the profound effects it can have on mental health. Through detailed explanations, learners were introduced to various mental health disorders that could develop because of substance abuse, emphasising the critical nature of early intervention and support. In addition to this, law enforcement officials from Thohoyandou SAPS presented compelling insights into the connection between substance use and delinquent behaviour, emphasising that such behaviours could lead to legal challenges and, ultimately, a bleak future for the youth involved. They shared poignant narratives of local youth who have faced arrests, illustrating the severe implications of substance use and reinforcing the importance of making informed choices.



The well-respected Team Makongoza, known for their expertise in youth discipline and rehabilitation, provided the learners with valuable lessons on the significance of self-discipline, decision-making, and the long-term benefits of resilience. The programme was expertly facilitated by Tshinakaho Tshilamulele from UNIVEN, who captivated the audience with her dynamic presentation style, infusing humour and liveliness that kept the learners engaged and eager to participate.



In a demonstration of appreciation for this collaborative initiative, the Principal of Ralson Tshinanne Secondary School and educators expressed their excitement about the impact of this programme.

They extended an invitation for ongoing support, particularly offering their assistance to grade 12 learners as they navigated the often-daunting process of applying for enrolment at tertiary institutions. This initiative not only equipped students with essential knowledge and skills but also fostered a sense of community and empowerment that encourages positive choices among the youth.



Invitation For 2025 Disability Indaba

THEME: The importance of creating an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of their abilities, feels valued and supported.



04 September 2025



09h00



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THOHO YA NZIE

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- Hygiene items
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- Staff and Students
- Local Businesses & Industry Partners
- General Public & International Donors

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Help us build a caring, student-centered university.

JOIN US ON BACKABUDDY
A trusted platform aligned with UNIVEN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan for digital innovation, student well-being and inclusive support.

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- Digital Thank You Note
- Website & Social Media Mentions
- Invitations to Recognition Events

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- Pursue their studies without interruptions
- Regain dignity
- Focus fully on their academic goals
- Thrive emotionally & mentally

Donate Today. Share Hope. Shape a Future. FOR MORE INFO:

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Ethics Hotline number:
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