

## UNIVEN and Kabarak University partners to establish African Musicology Institute: A Vision Realised Through Collaboration and Innovation



**L-R:** Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNIVEN, and Prof Henry Kiplangat, Vice-Chancellor of Kabarak University, exchange a handshake following the official signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) and Kabarak University in Kenya have officially partnered to launch the African Musicology Institute (AMI), a landmark initiative that marks a new era of pan-African scholarship, cultural preservation, and academic entrepreneurship. On 4 September 2025, the two universities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at UNIVEN campus, establishing AMI as the first African institute fully dedicated to the study, documentation, and celebration of Africa's rich musical heritage.

This significant signing ceremony was led by the UNIVEN's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, and the Vice-Chancellor of Kabarak University, Prof Henry Kiplangat.

The seed for AMI was planted during a pivotal conversation between UNIVEN's former Chancellor, President Kgalema Motlanthe, and current Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni. Former President Motlanthe urged UNIVEN to lead in reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems, focusing on

culture, music, oral tradition, and performance. Prof Nthambeleni described AMI as the embodiment of this vision, an institution aimed at placing African voices at the heart of their own narratives.

The partnership is built on solid academic ties. Beginning with a 2023 delegation visit led by Prof Nthambeleni to Kabarak University and strengthened by prior collaboration between Prof Geoff Mapaya of UNIVEN and Prof Mellitus Nyongesa Wanyama of Kabarak University, who have co-supervised postgraduate research on indigenous music across Africa, the AMI formalises an already vibrant scholarly relationship through joint seminars, fieldwork, and virtual engagements.

AMI is designed not only as an academic centre but also as a self-sustaining, revenue-generating institution. It will offer short courses, cultural workshops, certification programmes, and digital content, partnering with creative industries to position itself as a model of entrepreneurial academia. Importantly, the institute's outreach extends to the global African diaspora, bridging cultural connections via online platforms and diaspora engagement programmes. A strategic partnership with experts in international development funding will facilitate access to financial support from organisations like UNESCO and the African Union, enabling AMI's growth and broader impact.



**Front row L-R:** Prof Tawanda Runhare, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Prof Henry Kiplangat, Mr Botwe Kraziya and Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo

**Back row L-R:** Prof Jeff Mapaya, Prof Mellitus Wanyama, Mrs Siphwe Lubisi, Dr Takalani Dzaga and Mr matome Mokoena

The signing ceremony featured a comprehensive operational overview delivered by UNIVEN's Chief Operating Officer, Mr Botwe Kraziya, underscoring institutional readiness and sustainability plans. Dr Mutshinyalo Ratombo presented AMI's mission to digitally archive endangered musical traditions, develop joint academic programmes, starting with a Master's in African Music Studies, and promote academic mobility.



*Mrs Siphwe Lubisi (left) ensured that the MoU complies with national regulations and governance standards*

Professors Mapaya and Wanyama reflected on their fruitful collaborative academic supervision. Prof Mapaya emphasised the critical importance of aligning new joint PhD programmes with national qualifications frameworks in South Africa and partner countries to ensure legitimacy and recognition. Prof Wanyama reaffirmed Kabarak University's commitment to high academic standards and mutual accreditation within this Pan-African framework.

As part of UNIVEN's strategic transformation agenda, AMI will be officially launched on 20 October 2025 alongside two other new academic institutes. Prof Mellitus Nyongesa Wanyama has been invited as a distinguished guest, symbolising the strengthening academic bridge between Southern and East Africa. Prof Henry Kiplangat of Kabarak University highlighted the initiative as a cultural renaissance, one that ensures African musicology is approached through African perspectives.

The African Musicology Institute represents a bold, innovative step toward honouring African heritage, empowering scholars, and establishing sustainable academic entrepreneurship.



From visionary leadership through ongoing collaboration, AMI exemplifies what leadership, culture, and scholarship can achieve together. This milestone underscores UNIVEN's commitment to excellence and African-centred knowledge production as it embarks on a new academic era. This partnership stands as a beacon of continental unity and academic innovation, promising to preserve, study, and celebrate Africa's musical legacy for generations to come.



## Strengthening Global Ties: Meet UNIVEN's New Partnership Officer, Ms Annah Chuene

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) is proud to welcome Ms Annah Chuene as the new Partnership Officer in the International Relations and Partnerships Directorate.



Annah brings with her over nine years of experience in international higher education, having previously served as International Relations Coordinator at the University of the

Western Cape (UWC), where she managed Erasmus+ projects, staff and student mobility programmes, internationalisation initiatives, and media and communications.

Her expertise extends to major international projects, including her role as the mobility toolkit leader for the University of Limpopo in the IMPALA Project, an Erasmus+ Capacity Building initiative funded by the European Commission. She also serves on the steering committee for APUA, a DHET-funded project on African partnership development, and in 2022, she was the secretariat for the 14th International SANORD Conference.

A recognised youth leader, Annah's leadership was acknowledged in 2016 when she received the prestigious Abe Bailey Travel Bursary. She has worked closely with key stakeholders such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), DIRCO, Home Affairs, foreign missions, and university leaders, while engaging with students from diverse backgrounds.

Passionate about advancing internationalisation in higher education, Annah is committed to strengthening UNIVEN's global networks, building impactful collaborations, and driving academic mobility.

"I am confident that Ms Chuene will provide the leadership and strategies needed to leverage UNIVEN's partnerships. This role is critical in strengthening our global networks and advancing our shared mission of

impactful collaborations," highlighted Mr Thabo Dikgale, Acting Director: International Relations and Partnerships

Please join us in welcoming Ms Annah Chuene to the University of Venda. We wish her great success in her new role.

## From Classroom to Courtroom: UNIVEN Law Students Make Semi-Final Debut



**Back row L-R:** Tshitamba Pfano, Manganyi Onndwela, Madzena Zwivhuya, Mabelebele Maletle,

**Front row L-R:** Mr Nkosinathi Mzolo and Ms Tiyani Mashimbye



First-year Law students from the University of Venda (UNIVEN) have set a new benchmark for the institution, with one of their teams reaching the semi-finals of the prestigious Kovsie Moot Court Competition. The annual contest, hosted by the University of the Free State, took place at the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein.

This year's competition brought together 16 teams from 8 universities across South Africa and neighbouring countries, including the University of the Free State, University of Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela University, University of Lesotho, and Rhodes University.

UNIVEN was represented by two teams made up of four students: Pfano Tshitamba, Onndwela Manganye, Zwivhuya Madzena, and Malete Mabelebele. Their historic advancement to the semi-finals as one of the top four teams marks a remarkable milestone for the University.

The competition offers first-year students a unique opportunity to argue cases in a real court setting. Teams prepare written submissions, known as memorials, and later present oral arguments before panels of senior counsels and magistrates. This process tests their skills in advocacy, court etiquette, mock trial procedures, and legal presentation.

The student representatives were selected by a panel comprising candidate attorneys from the UNIVEN Legal Aid Clinic, a part-time Law lecturer, and senior Law students. They were coached by the School of Law Moot Court Committee members Mr Nkosinathi Mzolo, Ms Cornelia van Graan, Adv. Norman Raphulu, and Ms Tiyani Mashimbye. Mr Mzolo and Ms Mashimbye also accompanied the teams to Bloemfontein.

Congratulating the teams, Prof Lonias Ndlovu, Director of the School of Law at UNIVEN, said: "Their performance is an outstanding achievement and a sign of great things to come. This success reflects the growing strength of our School of Law and the potential of our of our students."



L-R: Ms Cornelia Van Graan, Tshitamba Pfano, Madzena Zwivhuya, Mr Nkosinathi Mzolo

**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](mailto: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.**

# 2025 Disability Indaba Champions Inclusivity and Empowerment



*University of Venda staff and guests pose for a photo with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (fifth from left) and Kabarak's university Vice-Chancellor, Prof Henry Kiplangat (fourth from right)*

On Thursday, 4 September 2025, the University of Venda proudly hosted the 2025 Disability Indaba at the Sports Hall, an event that proved both impactful and inspiring. The day began with attendees gathering at the traffic circle next to the Disability Unit, setting a powerful tone for a gathering centred on awareness, inclusion, and transformation. More than 300 participants attended under the theme: The importance of creating an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of their abilities, feel valued and supported.

Far from being a mere formal occasion, the Indaba symbolised a firm commitment to dismantling barriers and promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Through compelling presentations, student-led contributions, and thought-provoking discussions, the programme aimed to foster a more inclusive academic environment, not only at the University of Venda but also within the broader educational community.

In a world still grappling with systemic inequality, the Disability Indaba stood as a significant stride towards a future where every voice is heard and every individual valued.



*Professor Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda*

The UNIVEN's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni delivered a supportive address. He praised ongoing inclusivity efforts on campus and reaffirmed the University's commitment that no student be left behind due to disability.



Professor Nthambeleni urged the removal of physical, digital, and attitudinal barriers, calling on staff and students alike to foster an equitable academic environment. Acknowledging the vital role of students living with disabilities, he reminded the audience that diversity is a strength of the University, stressing unity, empowerment, and collective responsibility in championing accessibility for all.



*Ms Nompumelelo Maponya, Administrative Officer, Department of Conservation Management and Law at SANPARKS*

At the 2025 Disability Indaba hosted by the University of Venda, keynote speaker Ms Nompumelelo Maponya delivered a powerful address that highlighted the potential of individuals with disabilities to lead, contribute, and innovate in society. Drawing from her personal journey and professional experience in biodiversity administration and environmental management, she challenged universities to move beyond symbolic gestures by investing in practical measures such as accessible infrastructure, informed policies, assistive technologies, and tailored academic support. She underscored that disabilities vary widely, and therefore, support must be personalised rather than generic, while fostering empathy, respect, and awareness through workshops, training, and open dialogue.

Ms Maponya's message centred on the belief that true inclusivity begins with seeing people with disabilities as individuals first, not defined by their impairments. She encouraged resilience and persistence, sharing her lived experiences of overcoming physical barriers, social exclusion, and discrimination.

Advocating for the principle "Nothing about us without us," she called for direct involvement of people with disabilities in decision-making processes. Her address was a compelling reminder that inclusivity is not optional but an essential, long-term investment in building a future where diversity is celebrated, and every person is seen, heard, and empowered.



*Professor Henry Kiplangat, Vice-Chancellor of Kabarak University, Kenya*

Professor Henry Kiplangat marked Disability Awareness Day by affirming that inclusivity is not an act of charity but a commitment to equity, dignity, and opportunity for individuals with disabilities to thrive. He urged society to reflect on its strength through its treatment of marginalised groups, emphasising that people with disabilities seek respect and equal footing, not pity. Reiterating the university's dedication to accessibility across teaching, infrastructure, and support services, he framed disability as a unique expression of human potential. He called on students and staff to embrace inclusivity as a guiding principle, stressing that no student should be left behind and that transformation requires empathy, persistence, and shared responsibility.



*Ms Usanda Bekebu, Lecturer, Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law*

Ms Bekebu delivered a heartfelt and thought-provoking message emphasising that inclusion is not tolerance but unquestioned acceptance. Drawing from both scholarly work and her personal experiences growing up around children with disabilities, she challenged the audience to see inclusive education not as a policy goal but as a moral imperative. She urged lecturers and academic staff to value diversity within class-rooms as a strength, not an obstacle, and to go beyond superficial inclusion. Her key message was that fairness is not about treating everyone the same but giving each person what they need to thrive.



*Ms Pride Ngomani from the Disabled Student Council*

Representing the Disabled Student Council, Ms Pride Ngomani expressed deep appreciation for the Disability Indaba, especially the moving keynote address by Ms Maponya. She highlighted the importance of hosting such events regularly to continually raise awareness and improve inclusivity for students living with disabilities. She reminded the audience that not all disabilities are present from birth, life events can bring change and stressed the need to accept individuals for who they are. Ms Ngomani acknowledged the university's ongoing academic and psychological support and encouraged students to participate actively in all campus events.

Mr Bernard Matsoso, a PhD candidate at Deakin University (which country), shared insights from his research into inclusive practices at universities like UNIVEN.



*Mr Bernard Matsoso, PhD Candidate, Deakin University*

His work explores disability through the lens of Ubuntu; a philosophy centred on shared humanity. He emphasised that awareness and inclusion must go beyond students with disabilities, extending to all university stakeholders, including cleaners and administrative staff. He announced plans to connect students with disabilities to scholarship opportunities in Australia and expressed his desire to partner with the university for workshops. His remarks were grounded in both academic research and humanistic values.



*Professor Lindiwe Mulaudzi, Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL)*

Prof Lindiwe Mulaudzi when welcoming the audience to the event described the Indaba as a vital moment to reflect on the experiences and contributions of people with disabilities within the university. Emphasising inclusivity as the event's core message, Professor Mulaudzi called for increased awareness, advocacy, and action to ensure all students, regardless of ability, are given equal opportunities to succeed both academically and socially.



She stressed that the Disability Indaba serves as both a celebration and a catalyst for transformation in higher education.



*Dr Refilwe Pila-Nemutandani, Head of Student Counselling and Career Development Unit, University of Venda*

Dr Refilwe Pila-Nemutandani closed the event commending the University's leadership, appreciating the guest speaker's courage in sharing her story, and emphasising values such as persistence, Ubuntu, and recognising the strengths of all students,

especially those with disabilities. She reminded attendees that true inclusion demands collective advocacy and active participation.

The Disability Indaba highlighted the urgent need for genuine inclusion, driven by empathy, awareness, and structural support. It affirmed that true transformation begins when every voice is heard and every individual is valued.



## DAAD Information Session to Advance Students' Global Academic Opportunities in Germany



*UNIVEN staff and students with Ms Eden Galetta (DAAD) in the centre*

On 5 September 2025, the University of Venda's Directorate of International Relations and Partnerships hosted an insightful DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) information session at the UNIVEN Research Conference Centre. The event was purposefully organised to provide students with comprehensive guidance on accessing international academic opportunities, enabling them to develop as competitive global scholars.

Dr Anyway Mikioni officially opened the session by emphasising the importance of international exchange programmes in broadening students' academic and cultural perspectives. These programmes expose students to diverse teaching methodologies and foster critical intercultural competencies essential for success in an increasingly globalised world. Dr Mikioni further enriched the introduction with a personal reflection on his transformative exchange experience in Germany, highlighting the valuable lessons gained on adaptability and cultural understanding.

The session was presented by Ms Eden Galetta, a DAAD representative and former exchange student. She provided an overview of DAAD as the largest international funding organisation for academic cooperation, representing German universities through a global network of more than 60 offices. Ms Galetta clarified that DAAD's offerings extend beyond PhD scholarships to include numerous opportunities for undergraduate and Master's students across a broad spectrum of disciplines.

Germany's appeal as a study destination was comprehensively outlined. The country boasts a world-class education system, with over 20,000-degree programmes offered in English, and most public universities charging little to no tuition fees. Emphasis was placed on practical learning opportunities available at Universities of Applied Sciences, which often integrate internships or dual study programmes combining academic study with professional experience.

The presentation devoted significant attention to clarifying the application and funding process. Students were encouraged to utilise online resources such as [daad.de/en](https://daad.de/en) and the interactive portal [myguide.daad.de](https://myguide.daad.de) to identify programmes aligned with their academic and career interests. Detailed information was provided on scholarship opportunities including the Helmut-Schmidt-Programme for Master's students in fields such as Public Policy and Economics. Selection criteria include academic merit, with a typical benchmark of 70%, alongside motivation and engagement in social or political initiatives.

For self-funded applicants, practical guidance was provided regarding financial requirements, including maintaining a blocked account with an estimated monthly living expense of €992. The session concluded with an engaging question-and-answer segment addressing important considerations such as the absence of upper age limits for funding, academic eligibility criteria relating to the date of the most recent qualification, and regulations around part-time employment and concurrent funding.

Both Ms Galetta and Mr Matome Mokoena encouraged students to actively pursue available opportunities and to build confidence through international academic engagement. Mr Mokoena furthermore encouraged the students to be ready to leverage on such mobility opportunities by leveraging on the IRP's Passport Drives by applying for their passport on campus. Mr Tsundzuka Hakamela also reminded participants of the forthcoming UNIVEN Internationalisation Week, scheduled from 30 September to 2 October 2025, which will feature additional initiatives supporting students' global ambitions.

The enthusiastic participation and insightful questions demonstrated UNIVEN's commitment to fostering a globally minded student community prepared to contribute as future leaders on the international stage.