



University of Venda Hosts 2025 International Dictionary Day Commemoration



Group photo of delegates and speakers

On Thursday, 16 October 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) hosted the 2025 International Dictionary Day Commemoration. This Dictionary Day commemoration was held under the theme *'Intelligent Lexicography: Inclusive Dictionary-Making in the Age of AI.'*

The event, held in collaboration with Tshivenda National Lexicography Unit and Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), highlighted the importance of language preservation and innovation in an increasingly digital world.



Honourable Funani Jerry Maseko, Limpopo MEC for Sport, Arts and Culture

In his keynote address, the Honourable Funani Jerry Maseko, MEC for Sport, Arts and Culture in Limpopo, described a dictionary as “a bridge between generations.” He explained that it empowers children to read their grandparents’ stories and enables future scholars to understand where we come from so that they can determine where we are going. Speaking on the theme of language and technology, he encouraged the use of digital tools to democratise access to knowledge in the age of artificial intelligence, while reminding everyone to remain rooted in African identity and culture.

Quoting President Awombegi, he affirmed, ***“We are an African people, and we must affirm our identity in all we do.”*** Honourable Maseko emphasised that AI should not be trained only in

global languages but must also include African ones, ensuring that indigenous terms and expressions are preserved and understood. Reflecting on the significance of the newly launched dictionary, he described it as a statement of collaboration between language experts, communities, and technology a vision of an inclusive society where every voice matters. He concluded by highlighting that dictionaries are not merely linguistic tools, but powerful instruments of empowerment, identity, and pride. Quoting Nelson Mandela, he said, ***“If you talk to a man in a language he does not understand, that goes to his head. But if you talk to him in his language, that goes to the heart.”*** His words served as a powerful reminder that language is the heart of our heritage and a key to shaping our shared future.



UNIVEN Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Prof Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele

Professor Eucebious Lekalakala-Mokgele warmly welcomed guests, speakers, and colleagues, emphasising the transformative power of language as a bridge that connects communities to their roots and strengthens cultural identity. She highlighted UNIVEN’s commitment to developing South African official languages, including Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Sepedi, isiNdebele, siSwati, English, and South African Sign Language, while acknowledging other languages, such as Chinese, which reflect

the country’s growing linguistic diversity. Noting the University’s pride in hosting two National Lexicographic Units for Tshivenda and Xitsonga and their respective national language bodies, she spoke on the event’s theme, ***“Intelligent Lexicography: Inclusive Dictionary-Making in the Age of Artificial Intelligence,”*** urging collaboration, investment in linguistic technologies, and the inclusion of indigenous languages in digital platforms so that “every language has a place in the technological era.”



Ms Maggie Hlugwani, the University of Venda's Campus Health HIV/AIDS Coordinator (holding the microphone)

The ceremonial lighting of the candle was carried out by Ms Maggie Hlugwani, the University of Venda's Campus Health HIV/AIDS Coordinator, symbolising enlightenment, hope, and the enduring power of words. She reflected on the vital role of dictionaries, highlighting them as

beacons of knowledge, tools for education, and instruments for unity and empowerment. The act served as a poignant reminder of how language preserves cultural heritage while fostering understanding and connection across communities.



Ms Joyce Madiba, PanSALB's Senior Provincial Manager

Ms Joyce Madiba, PanSALB's Senior Provincial Manager gave the purpose of the day. She highlighted that the purpose of the event was clear: to celebrate the power of words, promote

inclusive dictionary-making, and demonstrate how language can serve as a tool for learning, cultural preservation, and community empowerment.



Prof Mbulungeni Madiba, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University

Prof Mbulungeni Madiba, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University and an expert in language planning and policy, addressed the audience on the growing influence of artificial intelligence in language and education. While he acknowledged AI's remarkable potential, he emphasised that certain aspects of human knowledge and experience cannot be replaced or erased by technology. He urged everyone to focus on

evolving and bettering themselves in areas where AI's reach is limited, highlighting that technology, while powerful, remains a tool that complements rather than replaces human insight and creativity. Prof Madiba encouraged collaboration and innovation in multilingual education and concluded with the thought, *"Artificial intelligence can never erase certain things; it is up to us to evolve and better ourselves in areas where its reach is limited."*



Mr Julius Dantile, Executive Head of Language at the Pan South African Language Board

Mr Julius Dantile, Executive Head of Language at the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), spoke on the persistent issue of linguistic inequality, questioning the fairness of having a single language dominate as a "universal" medium. To illustrate his point, he asked the audience if they knew the meaning of

the word "avidavitit" in siSwati and most admitted they did not. He emphasised that many concepts and ideas would be easier to understand if expressed in one's mother tongue, suggesting that greater linguistic inclusivity would not only be practical but also equitable.



Dr Respect Mlambo

Dr Respect Mlambo, a Researcher from the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR), expressed gratitude for being part of the celebration and reaffirmed the Centre's commitment to advancing indigenous languages through digital innovation. He highlighted the urgent need for online dictionaries in South Africa's indigenous languages and encouraged collaboration among lexicographers and linguists to address this gap.

Dr Mlambo also introduced LwimiLinks, an open-source national technological platform developed

by SADiLaR in partnership with universities, including the University of Pretoria. The platform serves as a central hub for multilingual terminology and language resources, promoting collaboration, standardisation, and access to verified linguistic data. He explained that LwimiLinks enhances terminology development by enabling centralised access, multilingual growth, and capacity building across institutions ultimately strengthening South Africa's digital language landscape and supporting linguistic inclusivity in education and research.



Thovhele Kennedy Midiyavhathu Tshivhase

Representing the Tshivhase Royal House, Thovhele Kennedy Midiyavhathu Tshivhase delivered a message of support that underscored the importance of preserving indigenous languages. In honour of the celebration of mother tongues, he proudly highlighted that Tshivenda is among the recognised written and spoken languages that cross national borders.

Drawing inspiration from the book of Matthew 14:6, he reminded the audience that ***“one cannot teach what they do not understand,”*** acknowledging the pastors present who affirmed the truth of his words.

He went on to stress that leaders must serve as a light to the nation a role that includes the duty to safeguard and promote our languages. This, he said, is a lasting gift that will help future generations recognise and carry forward their cultural heritage. Referencing Proverbs 9:10, Thovhele Tshivhase encouraged continued dedication to the development of dictionaries and language resources. In closing, he extended an open invitation to all to support the protection and promotion of indigenous languages, assuring that the Tshivhase Royal House remains ready to assist in this important mission.



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

Prof Tawanda Runhare, Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing sincere appreciation to all who contributed to the success of the 2025 International Dictionary Day Celebration and Dictionary Launch. He extended gratitude to the guest speakers, partners such as PanSALB, and SADiLaR, and the University management for their unwavering support in promoting multilingualism and language preservation. Prof Runhare

commended the organising committee for their dedication and teamwork, noting that the event stood as a testament to the University of Venda's commitment to advancing indigenous languages through research, innovation, and education. He concluded by encouraging continued collaboration among linguistic experts, communities, and institutions to ensure that African languages continue to flourish in the digital age.

HIV and TB are a social challenge requiring collective action - says Dr Mphothulo



Faculty of Health Sciences Executives posing with Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo (middle)

On 17 October 2025, the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) hosted a Public Lecture by Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo at the Research Conference Centre. The lecture, titled 'Rural Health Matters: Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges for Collaborative, Inclusive and Accessible Care,'

explored the challenges of rural healthcare and the need for teamwork to improve access and inclusion. The event brought together community members, NGOs, students, academics, and health professionals to reflect on ways to support underserved communities.



Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo, President and Chair of the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society

Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo, President and Chair of the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society, delivered a Public Lecture on Rural Health Matters: Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges for Collaborative, Inclusive and Accessible Care. He highlighted South Africa's quadruple burden of disease, including Maternal & child health, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), Violence & Injuries, HIV and TB.

Dr Mphothulo noted that despite the progress made since 1994, HIV and TB continue to pose significant challenges, with South Africa remaining a global epicenter of the HIV pandemic, and with 8 million people living with HIV (PLWHIV). This means that 20% of all people living with HIV (PLWHIV) worldwide are in South Africa. He emphasised that HIV is not solely a medical issue; it is also a significant social problem. The statistics reveal a troubling disparity, with 16.4% of females and only 8.8% of males living with HIV. As a result, the burden of HIV predominantly affects rural areas and informal settlements, primarily impacting females and individuals aged 35 to 49 years, while it causes more deaths among males. Annually, there are approximately 150 thousand new infections of HIV, with a significant proportion

occurring among individuals aged 15 to 24 years. Dr Mphothulo further indicated that the burden of TB is most severe in informal settlements and overcrowded dwellings. It is particularly prevalent among males, people living with HIV, and individuals aged between 35 to 49 years, with a higher death rate in males than females. He stated that there is about 2 million of people living with HIV who are not on treatment and that, "100 thousand people with TB are not on treatment." Universities could play a crucial role in addressing these issues through research, collaboration with organisations, and training the next generation of health leaders. Dr Mphothulo said the war against HIV and TB will not be won in academic conferences or lecture rooms, but in the communities.

He highlighted male circumcision as a key strategy, citing research that shows it can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by 60%. To meet the 95-95-95 UNAIDS targets for ending HIV by 2030, Dr Mphothulo expressed the need to focus on high-risk groups, such as young women and key populations. He also discussed the need for social support for TB patients, including "information support, emotional support, companionship support, and material support."



Prof Thivhulawi Malwela, a Research Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences - UNIVEN

Prof Thivhulawi Malwela, Research Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences welcomed attendees congregated at the Research Conference Centre, saying they were gathered to break barriers and build bridges for collaborative, inclusive, and accessible care. She referenced a conference on co-creation, highlighting the need to work with communities rather than imposing external solutions. Prof

Malwela noted that community participation is crucial for successful research and healthcare outcomes and encouraged attendees to work together towards a healthier future. She also acknowledged the presence of community members and organisations, thanking them for their involvement and urging them to continue participating in healthcare initiatives.



Attendees engaging the speaker during Question-and-Answer session

During the Question-and-Answer session, attendees raised questions and concerns about the upcoming HIV injection, surveillance systems, partnerships, stigma, funding, and collaboration. Dr Mphothulo explained the injection's efficacy and cost-effectiveness, prioritising high-risk groups. Speakers

discussed addressing stigma, promoting awareness across all age groups, and sustaining funding for HIV treatment. The discussion highlighted the need for collective efforts to combat HIV, including collaboration between government departments, organisations, and countries.



Prof Lindelani Mushaphi, Deputy Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Health Sciences - UNIVEN

Prof Lindelani Mushaphi, Deputy Dean for Teaching and Learning at the Faculty of Health Sciences, UNIVEN rendered a vote of thanks. She expressed gratitude to Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo for sharing valuable insights and experiences, highlighting the need to destigmatise HIV. Prof

Mushaphi thanked the community members, NGOs, NPOs, staff members, and students for their participation, making the event a success. She also appreciated the Department of Public Health for organising this public lecture.



Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo receiving an appreciation gift from UNIVEN



Community members, UNIVEN staff members and the guest speaker



UNIVEN staff members photographed with the guest speaker

NOTICE

NOTICE OF UNIVEN CONVOCATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Members of Convocation of the University of Venda are cordially invited to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Convocation which is scheduled to take place as follows:



**25 OCT
2025**

TIME: 12h00 – 14h30

VENUE: Senate Chamber

In terms of paragraph 56(1)-(4) of the University of Venda Institutional Statute, the Convocation consists of:

1. All the persons, other than the persons referred to in subparagraph (2), who were immediately before the commencement of this Statute members of the Convocation of the University.
2. The Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellors and the Registrar.
3. The permanent academic employees of the University with five years working experience and retired academic employees designated by Council on the recommendation of Senate to be members.
4. All graduates of the University.

AGENDA

1. Registration (confirmation of the Convocation Roll)
2. Opening and Welcome
3. Confirmation of the Agenda
4. Convocation AGM minutes of 11 May 2024
5. Vice Chancellor's State of the Campus report
6. Report of the President of Convocation
7. Vote of thanks and closure

ATTENDANCE

CLICK HERE TO RSVP

RSVP by not later than **24 October 2025**.

For additional information, please contact the Convocation Committee Administrator, Mr Mashudu Ramaleba, at **(015) 962 8824** or **(071) 632 3422** during office hours, or email mashudu.ramaleba@univen.ac.za

All attendees should bring their ID or driver's licence for verification.

#CreatingFutureLeaders



University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders



32ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

HOSTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

Theme:

Towards Excellence: Enhancing Funding Pathways and Student Outcomes through Human-Centric AI, Impactful Research, and Operational Intelligence

Date: 27 - 31 October 2025

Location: Kalahari Waterfront, Thohoyandou, Limpopo

Registration Is Open

Members:

Only attending the pre-conference workshop = **R1,000.00**

Only attending the conference = **R6,900.00**

Attending both the pre-conference and conference = **R7,900.00**

Non-Members:

Only attending the pre-conference workshop = **R1,600.00**

Only attending the conference = **R7,500.00**

Attending both the pre-conference and conference = **R8,500.00**

For more Information Visit:
www.saair-web.co.za



University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders



**UNIVEN
HOTLINE**

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.

THE 3RD ANNUAL LIMPOPO RESEARCH FORUM CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPER ABSTRACT



11-13 March 2026



**Waterberg District Area, Limpopo Province:
PALALA BOUTIQUE GAME LODGE AND SPA
(Tondor Beleggings Pty Ltd)**



Theme: Governance, Growth and Geopolitics in the Digital Age: Strengthening State Capacity and Economic Resilience through Technological Transformation

Background

The advent of the digital age has introduced profound changes in the structures of governance, economic systems, and global geopolitics. As technological innovation accelerates, governments across the world are faced with both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges in redefining their institutional capacities and developmental strategies. The 2026 conference, themed **"Governance, Growth and Geopolitics in the Digital Age: Strengthening State Capacity and Economic Resilience through Technological Transformation,"** reflects Limpopo Province's commitment to proactively respond to this evolving landscape.

This theme is situated within the broader objective of building a capable, responsive and future-oriented state. In the face of shifting geopolitical dynamics and the growing prominence of digital economies, Limpopo recognises the imperative to modernise state functions, foster inclusive economic participation and build resilience through the strategic application of digital technologies. The province seeks to align its developmental trajectory with national and global efforts aimed at leveraging technological transformation to enhance state efficacy and socio-economic outcomes.

A critical pillar of this transformation is digital governance and state modernisation. Advancing e-governance platforms presents a tangible opportunity to improve service delivery, transparency and enhance accountability. Institutionalising digital systems for integrated planning, real-time monitoring and citizen engagement is essential to enabling more agile and responsive governance structures. These digital interventions are not merely technical upgrades but represent a paradigm shift in how public institutions interact with citizens and stakeholders.

Complementing this is the imperative of building digital skills within the public sector and the broader population. The digital economy demands a workforce equipped with relevant competencies. Accordingly, the province places emphasis on developing a robust pipeline of digital skills through targeted public service training programmes, youth development initiatives, and collaborative partnerships with higher education institutions and TVET colleges. These efforts aim to cultivate a labour force that is adaptable, innovative, and aligned with the evolving demands of a technology-driven economy.

In parallel, public-sector innovation and cybersecurity readiness are gaining strategic importance. As government departments and municipalities increasingly depend on ICT infrastructure and digital systems, safeguarding these assets becomes paramount. The development of comprehensive cybersecurity strategies and data governance frameworks is necessary to protect state operations from emerging threats and to uphold public trust in digital government services.

Furthermore, the conference will explore the role of STEM education and industrialisation in fostering a knowledge-based economy. By mainstreaming science, technology, engineering, and mathematics across the education system, and by integrating research and innovation into industrial policy, the province aims to revitalise sectors such as agro-processing and manufacturing. Digital technologies, in this context, become enablers of sustainable industrial growth and competitiveness.

Lastly, the conference will address the implications of geopolitical disruptions on digital economies. The volatility of global markets, shifting alliances, and the reconfiguration of global value chains all have significant consequences for regional development. Limpopo's strategic focus is to build economic resilience by promoting regional digital trade, strengthening innovation ecosystems, and aligning with continental digital transformation agendas such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). To make sense of the above theme and to enable rigorous discussion, the following sub-themes are formulated.

1. Digital Governance and State Modernisation

- Advancing e-governance platforms to improve service delivery, transparency, and accountability.
- Institutionalising digital systems for planning, monitoring, and citizen engagement.

2. Building Digital Skills for a Capable and Future-Oriented State

- Strengthening digital skills development through public service training, youth programmes, and collaboration with higher education and TVET institutions.
- Aligning workforce development to the demands of the digital economy.

3. Public Sector Innovation and Cybersecurity Readiness

- Enhancing ICT infrastructure and systems across departments and municipalities.
- Developing cybersecurity strategies and data governance frameworks to safeguard public sector operations.

4. STEM Education and Industrialisation in the Knowledge Economy

- Mainstreaming STEM and innovation in basic and post-school education.
- Leveraging digital technologies and R&D to revitalise local industrialisation, agro-processing, and manufacturing capacity.

5. Geopolitical Disruptions and Digital Economies

- The influence of shifting global dynamics on Limpopo's digital and economic outlook.
- Building economic resilience through regional digital trade and innovation

This conference brings together scholars, policymakers, technologists, civil society actors, and private sector stakeholders to engage in critical dialogue and knowledge exchange. Through interdisciplinary engagement and evidence-informed policy discussions, the event aims to produce actionable insights that will guide Limpopo Province's digital transformation journey, enhance its economic resilience and contribute to broader national and continental development goals.

SUBMISSION OF AN ABSTRACT AND FULL PAPERS

Abstracts of between 250-350 words should be submitted on or before the due date:

Highlight the following information on the cover page of the abstract:
TITLE, NAME & SURNAME: **INDEPENDENT / STAFF / STUDENT**
GENDER **DISCIPLINE / DEPARTMENT** **E-MAIL**
TEL / CELL NO
Sub-Theme
ORAL: (tick) **POSTER: (tick)** **EXHIBITION (tick)**

Submission of an abstract and paper to:

lrabstractsubmission@premier.limpopo.gov.za

Papers submitted for possible publication in a journal special issue accredited by the department of higher education and training and strictly adhere to the editorial policy requirements regarding specifications for manuscript submissions of the secured journal.

Prospective contributors are specifically requested to ensure that the language and technical aspects of their contributions are of a high standard. In this regard, **proof of this effect would be required**. Except in special cases where prior permission has been obtained, papers should not exceed 8000 words.

Papers should be submitted electronically, typed in 1.5 line spacing, 12pt Times New Roman and accompanied by an English abstract of between 250 and 350 words.

Since papers are circulated anonymously for evaluation, the name and affiliation of the author(s) should be on a **separate page. Only the Harvard style will be accepted for references.**

By submitting a paper, authors certify that all co-authors are aware of the submission and consent to the presentation of the work. No author can submit more than two papers (sole or co-authored) for publication consideration. All submissions must be in Microsoft Word. The contact information for all authors should be included on the first page of the document.

Final approved papers adjudicated will be considered for publication in a Special Issue of a reputable and accredited Journal.

PAYMENTS OF REGISTRATION FEES

Registration fees are payable through the following bank details:

Name: **SAAPAM**
 Reference: **Limpopo Conference**
 Bank: **Standard Bank**
 Account: **012580015**
 Branch: **Hatfield**
 Code: **01-15-45-15**
 Account Type: **Cheque**

CONFERENCE FEES

National Delegates **R2000**
 International Delegates **R2500**

Make sure that you state the reference on the deposit slip.

Kindly email proof of payment to: SAAPAM@tut.ac.za and malindie@premier.limpopo.gov.za

IMPORTANT DATES OF SUBMISSION

Submission of abstracts: **30 November 2025**
 Notification of acceptance/non-acceptance: **10 December 2025**
 Submission of full papers: **30 January 2026**
 Final payment for registration: **28 February 2026**
 Late payment for registration: **06 March 2026**
 Conference Dates: **11 to 13 March 2026**

ACCOMMODATION / BOOKINGS

Delegates are responsible for arranging and paying for their accommodation and transportation. Arrangements can be made directly with Reservation Office:

TELEPHONE: **014 940 0080**
 CELL: **082 462 1259**
 EMAIL: events2@palala.co.za
 CONTACT PERSON: **Anel Matthyssen**

REGISTRATION FORM

Kindly register to the link below by right clicking the link and Open Hyperlink:
<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/0eKxGhtERi7orIgin=IprLink>