



UNIVEN Reaffirms Zero-Tolerance Approach to Gender-Based Violence During 16 Days of Activism



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) has reiterated its unwavering commitment to eradicating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as part of the global 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign. In a message to the University community, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, emphasised that there is no excuse for GBV and called on all members of

the institution to unite against all forms of abuse.

"GBV is a violation of human rights that undermines dignity, safety, academic success, and the well-being of our students and staff," said Prof Nthambeleni. He stressed that UNIVEN has a responsibility to lead with courage, compassion, and accountability.

To strengthen its institutional response, UNIVEN has established a Gender Desk within the Transformation Unit. This dedicated structure will:

- Provide survivor-centered support.
- Coordinate GBV prevention and response programmes.
- Manage reporting channels and ensure follow-up on cases.
- Drive awareness campaigns, training, and partnerships with key stakeholders.

The Gender Desk will work closely with Employee Relations, Campus Protection, and Legal Services to ensure a coordinated and timely response to all reported incidents.

Prof Nthambeleni urged the University community to speak out, report incidents, support survivors, and hold one another accountable. "Together, we can build a campus culture that rejects all forms of violence and promotes justice, equality, and compassion," he concluded.



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16 DAYS of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children



25 November – 10 December

#SAYNOTOGBV
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Indigenous Knowledge Seen as Solutions for Health, Food Security, and Climate Challenge

On 17 November 2025, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) convened a Strategic Institutional Engagement at the Faculty of Health Sciences boardroom, focusing on advancing Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) within national research and innovation frameworks. The programme featured key contributions from

the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) and the National Research Foundation (NRF), highlighting strategic pillars, institutional alignment with the Decadal Plan, and opportunities for collaboration over the next five years.



Delegates pose for a photo



The engagement was opened by Prof Takalani Mashau, the Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education who framed the dialogue around collaboration and strategic alignment. His emphasis on the Decadal Plan signalled a clear institutional commitment to embedding Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) within innovation pathways for sustainable development.

Picture on the left: Prof Takalani Mashau, Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education



Prof Hassan Kaya, Director of the DSTI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (CEIKS)

Prof Hassan Kaya, Director of the DSTI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (CEIKS), shifted the focus to inclusivity and relevance. By redefining the Centre of Excellence as a “science mission,” he challenged traditional notions of academic excellence, advocating for a model that integrates indigenous knowledge with digital innovation to serve communities and the global knowledge economy. “Excellence must also contain relevance,” he stressed, underscoring the need for science and technology to be accessible and impactful.

Policy insights from Ms Shumi Rodolo, Deputy Director: Advocacy and Policy Development at the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), reinforced the structural backbone of IKS in South Africa. Grounded in national instruments such as the National Development Plan, the 2004 IKS Policy, and the Indigenous Knowledge Act of 2019, her perspective advocates for an equitable interface between indigenous and conventional knowledge systems, the institutionalisation of IKS, and mission-driven research. Her assertion “Indigenous knowledge is solutions” captured the essence of the day, leveraging indigenous wisdom to confront societal challenges from health to food security and climate resilience.



Ms Shumi Rodolo, Deputy Director: Advocacy and Policy Development at the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI)



Mr Nathan Sassman, Manager at the National Research Foundation (NRF)

In his presentation on Centres of Excellence and National Institutes for Research, Development and Innovation, Mr Nathan Sassman, Manager at the National Research Foundation (NRF), called for a fundamental mindset shift. “If you do not occupy this space, somebody else will,” he emphasised. He highlighted the need to reimagine South Africa’s innovation landscape, leveraging Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) for societal impact, and positioning the country

as a global leader. Sassman emphasised collaboration, inclusivity, and ambitious planning, pointing to potential institutes like the Indigenous Knowledge-Based Bio Innovation Institute. further stressed the need to transform current ways of working. This includes improving access to funding and investing in the development of local talent, particularly women in STEM. "It is about multidimensional transformation," he noted, urging attendees to think beyond conventional boundaries and to tap into the significant economic potential of IKS, such as traditional medicine's estimated R250 billion annual contribution.



Prof Jabulani Makhubele, Director of Research and Innovation at the University of Venda (UNIVEN), presented on behalf of Prof Fulufhelo Godfrey Netswera, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies, outlining UNIVEN's strategic alignment with the Decadal Plan. Leveraging its UNESCO Biosphere Reserve location, UNIVEN focuses on engaged scholarship, transformative education, and research in One Health and African Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), addressing local challenges in health, agriculture, and biodiversity. The University offers postgraduate programmes in African Studies and promotes entrepreneurship through initiatives like the Coach Lab training, aiming to enhance IKS research, innovation, and partnerships over the next five years.

The engagement concluded with a guided tour of the University of Venda's Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) facilities, providing participants with a firsthand look at the resources and infrastructure that drive research and innovation. This Strategic Institutional Engagement underscored UNIVEN's commitment to integrating indigenous knowledge into transformative education and sustainable development initiatives.

Picture on the left: Prof Jabulani Makhubele, Director of Research and Innovation

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.**

When Stories Spark Innovation: How UNIVEN's ESAP Champions Turned a Book into a Movement

Some stories don't just inspire you; they push you into action. For four University of Venda students, *Who Owns the Icehouse?* by Clifton Taulbert did exactly that. What began as a simple book club read soon ignited a journey of ambition, creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurial courage. Fuelled by the book's lessons on spotting opportunities and thinking like an entrepreneur,

these students evolved from curious readers into confident facilitators and eventually, into proud champions of the Entrepreneurship Student Ambassador Programme (ESAP). Their stories prove that entrepreneurship isn't about having perfect ideas, money, or timing; it's about initiative, resilience, and the boldness to turn inspiration into reality.



Rendani Mugivhi – Turning Knowledge into Action

For Rendani Mugivhi, a final-year BCom Business Management student, joining the book club was meant to simply “fill her free time.” But *Who Owns the Icehouse?* reshaped her thinking entirely. She discovered that success isn't luck; it's about taking calculated risks, embracing challenges, and staying adaptable. “There is no such thing as an easy ride,” Rendani says. “Knowledge

becomes powerful only when you use it.”

Today, Rendani approaches life with intention and action. As an ESAP ambassador, she hopes to inspire fellow students to start small, take brave steps, and use what they learn to make real-world impact.



Phindulo Reason Phophi – Growing Through Leadership and Courage

For Phindulo Phophi, a third-year LLB student, joining the ESAP book club felt like a dream come true. A lover of reading and deep conversations, she didn't expect the book to transform her entire view of entrepreneurship. "I used to think entrepreneurship is for people with money or big ideas," she shares. "But the book taught me it's really about mindset, seeing opportunities where others see obstacles."

Becoming a facilitator and ESAP ambassador challenged her to lead with purpose. One of her proudest memories is facilitating Chapter 4: Knowledge, where she learned that information only becomes powerful when applied. This mindset pushed her to turn her crochet hobby into a small business, Reason Crochets. What started as a pastime is now a growing creative venture. Her message to students: Don't wait for perfection. Start with what you have, stay open-minded, and surround yourself with people who inspire you.

Phophi Ravhura, a first-year BSc Botany and Zoology student, never imagined entrepreneurship had a place in her world, until she joined the ESAP Book Club. "The book made me realise that my life doesn't revolve around science only. There are so many opportunities if you look with an entrepreneurial mindset."



Phophi Ravhura – Discovering Possibilities Beyond Science

As the youngest facilitator and ambassador, she stepped out of her comfort zone and grew in confidence. She learned the importance of setting goals, working smart, and seeing failure as a stepping stone not a dead end. For Phophi, being an ESAP ambassador means showing up with determination and inspiring others to start early, think big, and stay resilient. "Don't let negatives discourage you, turn them into positives."



Uhone Nenzhelele – Unlearning Limits and Taking Action

For Uhone Nenzhelele, a second-year Biochemistry student, ESAP began with a simple invitation from a friend. What she found was life

changing. "I realised there is no perfect time to start. For me to grow, I had to unlearn some habits and take action with what I already have." Through facilitating Chapter 3: Action, Uhone learned patience, teamwork, consistency, and the importance of thinking before acting. The programme taught her to work with diverse groups and to create safe, empowering spaces for discussion. She now applies Icehouse principles to her everyday choices and even to the business she is currently building. "Success isn't achieved alone. You need a support system that keeps you motivated, and goal driven." She advises her peers to learn, reflect, and step outside their comfort zone.

A Shared Spark, Four Transformative Journeys, from different backgrounds and fields of study: management, law, science, and biochemistry; Rendani, Phindulo, Phophi, and Uhone all found their spark in Who Owns the Icehouse? and the ESAP Book Club. They learned that entrepreneurship isn't just about business, it's about mindset, courage, and turning challenges into opportunities. Their stories prove that with curiosity, determination, and the right support, any student can chart their own path and inspire others along the way.



GENDER DESK

The UNIVEN Gender Desk is available to support students and staff affected by GBV.

We offer confidential reporting, guidance, and case monitoring.

If you experience or witness GBV, please report to:

- 📍 Main Admin Building, 1st floor, Gender Desk: Transformation Office
- 📞 015 962 8369
- ✉️ gender@univen.ac.za

After hours, please contact Campus Protection Services.



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NOTICE UNIVEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS OFFICIAL OPENING

The University of Venda Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, cordially invites you to the Official Opening Ceremony of Four Major Infrastructure Projects, marking a significant milestone in our institution's transformation journey.



TIME: 12:00 PM

VENUE: UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, THOHOYANDOU

Projects to be Officially Opened

- Faculty of Health Sciences Building · R200 million
- Punda Maria Road and Bridge Project · R174 million
- Main Administration Building (Alterations & Additions) · R168 million
- Advanced Nursing Science Simulation Building · R71 million
- Total Investment: Over R600 million

Programme Highlights

- Keynote address by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education & Training
- Campus tour of the newly completed facilities
- Ribbon cutting and Plaque unveiling
- Networking lunch with university leadership and stakeholders
- Media showcase and video presentation

