



## Honouring Legacy, Celebrating Progress, Shaping the Future



UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni

The University of Venda held its 2025 Vice-Chancellor and Principal Year-End Function, Retirees and Long Service Awards Event on 9 December at the University Auditorium. Attended by hundreds of staff members and retirees, this occasion was dedicated to celebrating the year's achievements, honouring long-serving employees, and expressing sincere appreciation to those concluding their professional journeys. Guided by a spirit of gratitude and excellence, the event reflected the shared commitment to advancing education, research, and service within the university community.

The University of Venda concluded 2025 with what the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, called "a powerful celebration of achievement, resilience, and collective progress." He highlighted the year's milestones, stating, "We strengthened academic programmes, expanded research activity, deepened community engagement, and completed major infrastructure developments." He further noted the launch of Centres of Excellence and strategic Institutes, as well as the achievement of an unqualified audit outcome, adding, "With the successful close of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan and the approval of the UNIVEN Strategy 2026–2030, we are now firmly positioned as an agile, globally connected, and locally grounded institution ready to accelerate its impact."

**UNIVEN celebrates achievement, resilience, and a united commitment to transforming lives**

The ceremony paid tribute to 24 distinguished retirees whose decades of service shaped the academic, administrative, and cultural foundations of the University. Prof Nthambeleni expressed heartfelt appreciation, saying, "You have been the pillars of our community. Your loyalty and hard work have been the backbone of our success." Among these retirees were Mrs Grace Cibi, who served the University for 39 years; Dr Maanda Ligavha - Mbelengwa for 38 years; Mr Hector Makhuvha for 33 years; Ms Grace Mutsila for 31 years; and Mrs Sara Mammburu and Florah Nengwenani, each for 30 years. He emphasised that their legacy of mentorship, leadership, and scholarship will remain deeply embedded in the institution. Alongside them, long-service award recipients celebrating 10, 20, 30, and 40 years were recognised as "powerful examples of loyalty, excellence, and institutional pride."

In a moment of solemn reflection, the University honoured the memories of 16 students and 3 staff members who passed away in 2025, reaffirming its commitment to compassion and solidarity.

Looking ahead, Prof Nthambeleni concluded, "As we move into 2026, we do so with renewed purpose, strengthened leadership, and a united community committed to transforming lives through education, research, innovation, and meaningful community partnership."



Mr Botwe Kraziya, Chief Operating Officer at the University of Venda

Mr Botwe Kraziya, Chief Operating Officer at the University of Venda, opened the event by stressing the value of connection and appreciation: "It is important that we meet, we talk, we exchange numbers and become friends." He celebrated the retirees' role in building a resilient and innovative institution, noting, "We stand on your shoulders. We stand on the work that you started." Kraziya also urged wise financial planning for retirement, advising, "Look after your money. Get financial advice." He concluded with a warm invitation: "We are here to celebrate you... Let us have fun today."



Mrs Uanda Ndou, the Director of Human Resources, expressed heartfelt appreciation for the retirees' invaluable contributions to the University of Venda, noting that their dedication and service have strengthened the institution's foundation. She urged them to manage their pension funds wisely, stating that financial prudence is essential for a secure and fulfilling retirement.



Vho Florence Nengwenani



Vho Thivhilaeli Mulaudzi

Vho Florence Nengwenani vho vha vhaiwe vhashumi vho nothaho vha Yunivesithi ya Venda vho imela Service Staff vho livhuwa vhurangaphanda ha yunivesithi kha ngeletshedzo dzavho na u vha fara nga thonifho. Vho vha tutsuwedza uri vha shume ngauralo na kha mirafho i daho. Vho eletshedza vhaiwe vhane vha khou notha uri vha shumise masheleni nga vhuronwane, U bva kha tshenzhemo yavho kha tshumelo ya madzangano a vhashumi, vho ombedzela u thonifha vhurangaphanda na u tandulula u sa pfesana nga kha nyambedzano, vha fhedza nga khuwelelo ya vthuthihi na vphuphufeshinala.

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# Honouring Legacy, Celebrating Progress, Shaping the Future continued...

Ngeno Vho Thivhilaeli Mulaudzi musi vho imela vhashumi vha Admin vhari, "ndi kale heli duvha ro Ji lindela, ngauri wo vha muloro wanga wa u qiwana Jiwwe Ja maduvha ndi tshi khou notha kha heyi yunivesithi." Vho Mulaudzi vho livhuwa vhurangaphanda ha yunivesithi ngauri u bva tshe vha shuma kha heyi yunivesithi u bva iwaha wa gidi-ga tahe futahe sumbe (1997), vhari namusi khezwi yunivesithi yo no shanduka a i tsha fana na ya kale. Vha tshi pendela, vho humbela vhashumi vha univesithu uri vha shume nga u fhulufhedzea vha thogomele na matshudeni vhunga yunivesithi iyi hu matshudeni.



Dr Nkhangweni Mafenya

Dr Nkhangweni Mafenya, representing Academic staff, reflected on the profound impact retirees have had in shaping futures globally, commending their lasting contributions to the university. He wished them joy and peace in retirement, humorously noting they now have time for "full-time relaxation." He encouraged continued engagement, stating the university should call upon retirees for support when needed, and concluded with warm congratulations on this new chapter.



Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Professor Fulufhelo Netswera

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Professor Fulufhelo Netswera, closed the event by expressing heartfelt appreciation for the institution's collective achievements. He commended "the senior management team and those who have organised this event," while acknowledging the contributions of staff, students, and retirees who "make UNIVEN what it is today." Reflecting on the year's successes, he extended condolences for the loss of "16 students and 03 staff members," and celebrated long-serving employees and award recipients. Looking ahead, he affirmed the university's readiness for the future: "2026 awaits, and we are ready and raring to go."

The University will close on 10 December 2025 and reopen on 6 January 2026. As we prepare for this period, we encourage all employees to use the break to rest, recharge, and prioritise their well-being. Safety remains our highest priority, both on and off campus, and we urge everyone to stay vigilant and take the necessary precautions during the holiday season. We look forward to welcoming all staff members back in the new year, refreshed and ready to continue our work with renewed energy and focus.

Group photos of honoured UNIVEN staff:



10 years of service



20 years of service



30 years of service



40 years of service



Retirees

UNIVEN honours its legacy, celebrates collective achievements, and looks ahead with purpose, unity, and a shared commitment to transforming lives through education, research, and service



# UNIVEN Unveils R600 Million Infrastructure in Historic Leap for Rural Education



Hon Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training

On Friday, 5 December 2025, the University of Venda marked a historic milestone at its auditorium with the official opening of four major infrastructure projects, valued at over R600 million. The developments include the Faculty of Health Sciences Building, the Advanced Nursing Science Simulation Building, the Main Administration Building, and the Punda Maria Road and Bridge Project. These state-of-the-art facilities are set to transform teaching, research, and campus accessibility, positioning UNIVEN as a hub for academic excellence and innovation in the region.

Hon Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, while giving her address, described the official opening of UNIVEN's major infrastructure projects as "a partnership that signifies what we can achieve together in improving the quality of facilities in our institutions." She highlighted that the developments, worth over R600 million, are "the single largest capacity development intervention dedicated to the future of historically disadvantaged universities." Stressing the importance of employability, she stated: "It is not enough to invest in infrastructure and education if graduates remain unemployed, industry linkages must be part of our strategy." She also called for prudent management and regular maintenance of facilities, noting that "appropriate management of infrastructure is a catalyst to a well-functioning system." Concluding, she urged stakeholders to leverage these resources for research, innovation and skills development, saying: "Consider this your university, a beacon of hope and transformation for rural education."



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

Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda, officially opened four major infrastructure projects worth approximately R613 million, marking a significant step in the institution's transformation. These developments include the upgraded Main Administration Building, the Advanced Nursing Simulation Laboratory, the Faculty of Health Sciences Building, and the Punda Maria Road with its cable-stayed bridge and guardhouse. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal highlighted the Faculty of Health Sciences as one of the flagship facilities, featuring advanced simulation laboratories that mirror real clinical environments, immersive digital classrooms, and high-fidelity training equipment. Delivered despite challenges such as rising costs, environmental approvals, and technical complexities, these projects showcase UNIVEN's commitment to modernisation, sustainability, and academic excellence.

"Today marks a momentous occasion as we gather here to celebrate the launch of key infrastructure projects that will not only transform our landscape but also elevate the collective potential of our university," said Professor Nthambeleni. He added, "Together, we have built not only a physical structure but also a solid foundation of teamwork and shared purpose."

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal highlighted how these projects will enhance teaching, research, and community engagement. The new facilities are designed to support interdisciplinary learning, foster innovation, and strengthen health sciences education through advanced programmes and simulation-based training. "Our new facilities are designed with the future in mind. They incorporate the latest technologies, environmentally sustainable practices, and flexible spaces that adapt to the diverse needs of our academic community," he explained. Beyond academic benefits, the projects created over 11,000 person-days of employment and channelled R24.6 million to local businesses, demonstrating UNIVEN's dedication to economic empowerment and sustainable development. Professor Nthambeleni concluded, "We are shaping an institution that not only meets the challenges of today but is also poised to lead in the future."

The Vice-Chancellor further informed the guests that we are in the final stages of launching a new three-year bachelor's degree programme in Human Anatomy and Physiology. This programme aims to enhance the university's health sciences offerings, equipping graduates for a variety of careers in health, medicine, and research. It serves as a foundational step toward clinical professions and further academic pursuits in biomedical sciences, health policy, and related areas.

He said that by implementing this qualification, the University of Venda will be better positioned to address local healthcare workforce demands and will foster collaborations with hospitals, clinics, and industry partners for internships and practical projects.



MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure Limpopo, Hon Ernest Rachoene

In his remarks, the MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, Hon Ernest Rachoene, described the occasion as "the culmination of years of planning, coordination and hard work," celebrating the completion of major projects including the Main Administration building, the Advanced Nursing Science Simulation Laboratory, the Faculty of Health Sciences building and the Punda Maria Road and Bridge. He noted that these developments are "a sign of confidence in the university, confidence in our youth and confidence in the future of Limpopo." Rachoene stressed that "degrees matter, but environments matter too," highlighting how modern infrastructure enables learning, research and mobility. He urged students to "use these facilities fully, push yourself, ask difficult questions and prepare not only

to take jobs but to create them," affirming government's commitment to investing in education and accessibility as a driver of growth and opportunity.



Mr Rudzani Mushweu, Chairperson of Council

Mr Rudzani Mushweu, Chairperson of UNIVEN Council, opening the ceremony described the occasion as "a celebration of vision, courage and progress." He highlighted that the newly unveiled infrastructure represents more than physical structures, calling them "monuments of possibility" and symbols of academic innovation and investment in future generations. Mr Mushweu stated that "infrastructure is not an end in itself, it is an enabler," urging responsible use and optimisation to unlock their full potential. He concluded by encouraging continued dedication to building minds, solutions and a lasting legacy, before officially declaring the ceremony open.



Former SRC President, Mr Tsundzuka Hakamela

Former SRC President, Mr Tsundzuka Hakamela, reflected on the university's remarkable transformation since his tenure as

SRC President in 2018, noting that promises made during leadership appointments have materialised into visible progress. He highlighted significant academic growth, including a sharp rise in PhD graduates, and praised the improved campus infrastructure and global competitiveness of the institution. Hakamela commended the university's role in empowering communities, fostering smart village projects, and shaping future leaders. He concluded by expressing gratitude to management, staff, students, and the surrounding community for their collective effort in making the university a beacon of hope and opportunity.



Mr Botwe Kraziya, UNIVEN Chief Operating Officer

Mr Botwe Kraziya, UNIVEN Chief Operating Officer conveyed heartfelt appreciation to the Government, Council, partners, staff, students and guests, saying: "Thank you for being intentional about making universities like ours relevant and capable of providing high-quality education, even in a rural environment." He praised the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor and Council for their vision and support and acknowledged the collective effort that has shaped the university's progress. Looking ahead, he noted: "We have great plans for more infrastructure, new classrooms, residences and even a satellite campus, because we want this university to take its rightful place in the world." Kraziya concluded by expressing gratitude to all who contributed, adding: "Today we are a proud university leading in engaged scholarship, and we look forward to growing from strength to strength."



As the day progressed, guests witnessed the unveiling and ribbon-cutting of the gate leading to Punda Maria Road, which features a cable-stayed bridge and a guardhouse.





## UNIVEN Unveils R600 Million Infrastructure in Historic Leap for Rural Education continued...



This was followed by a toast led by the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Prof. Tshilidzi Mulaudzi, celebrating Unwavering Support, a Beacon of Hope, Everlasting Partnership, and Diligent Maintenance.



Thovhele Mmbangiseni Masia



Thovhele Kennedy Tshivhase

In delivering messages of support, Thovhele Mmbangiseni Masia (left) emphasised that these projects demonstrate a bright and promising future. Thovhele Kennedy Tshivhase (above) also reaffirmed his continued support for the University.



Unveiling of the bridge



Cutting the ribbon and Unveiling of the Punda Maria road

## From Language to Satellites: UNIVEN's China Partnership Ignites a New Era of African Innovation



The University of Venda (UNIVEN) is taking decisive steps into global leadership, where language becomes an infrastructure and satellites power classrooms, farms, and cities. This bold transformation has now received the highest national recognition, with President Cyril Ramaphosa formally congratulating Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Bernard Nthambeleni on the establishment of the China-Africa Global South Institute at UNIVEN. In his official message, the President commended the University for advancing South-South cooperation, strengthening people-to-people exchange, and embedding global partnership at the heart of local development. He affirmed that the Institute is not only a university achievement, but a national strategic asset for diplomacy, knowledge exchange, and inclusive growth.

The China-Africa Global South Institute is more than a building. It is a public-facing knowledge hub designed to transform language from a barrier into a bridge for research, trade, and cultural literacy between Africa and China. Chinese inscriptions on the façade declare a shared scholarly purpose, while a striking steel "linguist" screen, designed as fragmented forms resolving into clarity, physically represents the journey from misunderstanding to understanding. Inside, the Institute brings together student innovation hubs, public dialogue forums, digital linguistics laboratories, and collaborative research and governance spaces. Together, these spaces position UNIVEN as a continental leader in cross-border scholarship, policy engagement, and South-South integration.

At the same time, UNIVEN is redefining the future of teaching and learning through the rollout of GIS-enabled Smart Classrooms under the China-South Africa Joint Research Centre. These classrooms integrate interactive boards, cloud systems, sensors, high-speed connectivity, and Internet of Things (IoT) platforms to deliver immersive, technology-driven education. They are not merely infrastructure upgrades, but a reimagining of education delivery for rural Africa, enhancing student experience, modernising pedagogy, strengthening research capacity, and repositioning UNIVEN as a fully scalable smart campus model for the continent.

On the University's experimental farm, another quiet revolution is underway. Through the integration of BeiDou satellite navigation, remote sensing, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and precision farming technologies, UNIVEN is transforming traditional agriculture into a fully digital precision farming system. Real-time data on soil, crops, and livestock now enable smart irrigation, targeted fertilisation, early pest and disease detection, GPS-based animal health monitoring, and AI-driven decision-making. The result is higher yields, reduced water and chemical use, lower production costs, and a significantly smaller environmental footprint. Beyond research, this digital farm is being positioned as a regional hub for farmer support and training across the entire SADC region, directly advancing food security and climate resilience.

The partnership with Beihang University in China is also pushing the frontier of green infrastructure and intelligent mobility. Through new research chairs in Smart and Green Transport, Intelligent Cities, and Autonomous Vehicles using Artificial Intelligence, UNIVEN is helping shape the future of mobility and urban development in South Africa. These initiatives directly support the strategic Musina-Makhado-Polokwane-Pretoria transport corridor, a national priority for logistics, mining exports, industrialisation, and job creation. AI-powered vehicles, big data systems,

and sensor-driven road diagnostics will modernise road safety, reduce infrastructure failures, improve maintenance planning, and future-proof transport systems across both rural and urban regions.

Each of these research chairs is funded at R50 million over five years, linked to a broader R500 million Chinese cooperation commitment announced through intergovernmental science and technology agreements. The impact will be measured in dozens of MSc and PhD graduates, high-impact international research publications, joint patents, China-South Africa staff and student exchanges, policy briefs for government, and direct support to SMEs and rural communities. These programmes are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, South Africa's National Development Plan, and the G20 agenda for inclusive growth, resilient infrastructure, food security, and digital transformation.

With formal recognition from the President of South Africa, the China-Africa Global South Institute now stands as a national beacon of international cooperation, African innovation, and knowledge diplomacy. From language and culture to satellites and smart transport, UNIVEN is demonstrating that a rural-based African University can drive global transformation, anchored in sustainability, technology, and inclusive development.



# The Registrar's Division Conducts 2026 Selection, Admission and Registration Dry Run



The Registrar's Division held a comprehensive dry run for the 2026 Selection, Admission and Registration processes on 04 December 2025 at the New Education Building Lecture Hall. The exercise formed part of the University's continuous commitment to strengthening institutional readiness, improving service delivery and ensuring operational efficiency ahead of the 2026 registration cycle.

The dry run had key stakeholders involved in the admissions and registration value chain to simulate processes, test systems and assess operational workflows under real-time conditions. The objective was to identify challenges early, confirm system readiness and enhance coordination across departments responsible for student administration, academic support and enrolment management.



The University Registrar, Dr. Joel Baloyi presented on the purpose of the 2026 Selection, Admission and Registration Dry Run, emphasising the need to improve understanding of the end-to-end registration process and reduce assumptions and blame arising from limited system exposure. He highlighted the importance of engaging key stakeholders to identify potential risks, anticipate failures, and propose solutions before full implementation.

Dr. Baloyi also explained the role of the university's automated admissions system in ensuring fairness, transparency and efficiency amid growing application numbers. He reflected on challenges experienced in 2025, including over-enrolment and incorrect programme codes, as critical lessons for improvement. The dry run, he concluded, is intended to strengthen system integrity and enable a smooth, seamless registration process in 2026.



Mr. Mpfariseni Ligudu opened the dry run by explaining that the session would streamline all processes from start to finish, beginning with the application process, followed by selection, admission, auto-promotion, academic exclusion, student appeals, and ending with online registration.

The session explored Dry Run Processes, led by various officials responsible for each section of the registration cycle:



*Ms Thendo Nefale*

- Ms Thendo Nefale presented on the Application Process, explained that all undergraduate, postgraduate and international applications are completed online via the university website and are open from 1 May to 30 September 2025 with no application fee. She outlined the steps of completing biographical details, selecting a qualification and creating a PIN to submit the application. Academic results are auto-populated for matriculated learners, while current Grade 12 learners upload Grade 11 results. Supporting documents may be uploaded immediately or later via MyAccess. A student number and confirmation email are generated automatically after submission.



*Mr Godfrey Tharage*

- Mr Godfrey Tharage outlined how the Selection and Admission system will activate on results release day, allowing applicants to log in with their ID or passport number. He explained that applicants can view results, see admission status, and select other available qualifications if they do not qualify for their first choice. The system only allows selection of programmes for which applicants qualify and confirms admission automatically. He emphasised that admitted applicants must register within three days. He also covered internal processes such as updating results, programme codes, and managing quotas.



*Mr Azwinndini Mulaudzi*

- Mr Azwinndini Mulaudzi led the Back Office Dry Run providing a practical demonstration of how academic processes are managed on the system. He explained Auto Promotion, showing how eligible students are progressed automatically after results are processed. He also outlined Academic Exclusion, including key rules and codes applied when students do not meet progression requirements. In addition, he detailed the Student Appeals process, explaining how excluded students submit appeals online. The session highlighted measures in place to ensure accuracy, fairness and accountability in academic administration.



*Mr Seth Ugoda*

- Mr Seth Ugoda concluded by stressing that registration must be completed within 72 hours after selection. Students may register from anywhere, with ICT labs available to support those with connectivity challenges. He said assistance will be provided by staff and student assistants, but students must complete registration themselves. He emphasised the importance of checking the proof of registration for correctness. Guidelines for excluded students will also be communicated to ensure a smooth process.

The session also allowed all stakeholders that were involved to raise concerns, seek clarification and share observations from the simulation that focused on constructive discussions focused on system responsiveness, interdepartmental coordination and communication flow.

Mr. Ligudu delivered the closing Remarks reflected on how system checks were once done informally and emphasised the commitment to making the dry run an annual flagship activity that is better organised each year. He highlighted the importance of stakeholder participation and input in strengthening the process. He urged all units to work together and collaborate to ensure a smooth and hassle-free 2026 selection, admission and registration process. He also expressed appreciation to all presenters and participants for their valuable contributions. He concluded by encouraging everyone to rest during the festive season and return re-energised for the 2026 academic year.

Through this initiative, the University reaffirmed its dedication to delivering a smooth and student-centred registration experience. By testing processes ahead of time, the institution aims to minimise delays, reduce errors and improve service efficiency for both prospective and returning students.





# MTN Digital Skills for Digital Jobs Graduation Ceremony Celebrated Student Achievement and Digital Empowerment at UNIVEN



Graduates of the MTN Digital Skills for Digital Jobs programme celebrating their successful completion during the ceremony

The University of Venda (UNIVEN), through its Institute for Rural Development, IT Department and Department of Computer Sciences in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, and in strategic partnership with Vhembe District Municipality, MTN South Africa Foundation and Datacomb Development Hubs proudly hosted the MTN Digital Skills for Digital Jobs (DS4DJ) Graduation Ceremony at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) Sports Hall on 27 November 2025. This milestone event celebrated and recognised the achievements of more than 100 learners who completed the programme. This highlighted the importance of digital skills in addressing youth unemployment and driving innovation in an evolving labour market.

The programme equipped learners with practical knowledge in digital literacy, entrepreneurship, workplace readiness and technology-driven problem-solving, enabling them to actively participate in the digital economy. This should be viewed as a powerful model of engaged scholarship, driven through linking academic excellence with real societal needs to enhance employability and unlock innovation-driven opportunities for rural communities.

## A Programme Anchored in National and Global Digital Transformation Priorities

The DS4DJ programme is aligned with South Africa's broader national development priorities, including the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 vision, the national digital economy strategy, and the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies' efforts to expand digital access in rural and underserved communities. Globally, the programme resonates with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). By helping learners acquire industry-relevant digital skills, the programme directly contributes to building a workforce capable of benefitting from and contributing to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

**UNIVEN is equipping learners with skills to drive innovation and opportunity**

## Keynote Address: A Call for Unity, Inclusion and Innovation



MMC Cllr Adv Mudunugu from Vhembe District Municipality delivering the keynote address

Member of the Mayoral Committee from Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Adv Anderson Mudunugu, delivered the keynote address. He revealed that the Municipality sincerely appreciated the strong and purposeful partnership between UNIVEN and MTN Foundation, which brought meaningful change to local communities. "Through this collaboration, we are investing in people, restoring dignity and ensuring that development reaches even the most remote rural areas where opportunity has long been limited. This partnership stands as a powerful example that unity and shared vision can overcome inequality and build lasting progress," he said.

He said as South Africa rises in global leadership through innovation and digital transformation, we are reminded that technology is no longer optional but essential for economic growth and social development. Advocate Mudunugu further noted that this digital skills programme had equipped the youthful graduates with future-ready skills, enhanced the opening of pathways to employment and entrepreneurship, and had huge potential to strengthen local economies. He argued, "It reflects our unwavering commitment to building a district where opportunity is inclusive, progress is shared and no one is left behind."

## Vice-Chancellor's Address: A Celebration of Achievement, Possibility and Lifelong Learning



UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni congratulating the graduates and emphasising the importance of digital transformation and lifelong learning

The UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, delivered the partner address and congratulated the graduates on completing the Digital Skills for Digital Jobs programme, describing the occasion as both a celebration of achievement and a reflection of possibility. He commended the learners for their commitment, discipline and courage in embracing digital transformation, stating that their presence at the ceremony was a symbol of growth, resilience and readiness for the future. Prof Nthambeleni emphasised that the graduation represented more than the conclusion of training because it also marked the beginning of a journey into innovation, leadership and lifelong learning. For him, the programme demonstrated ample evidence that real development is achieved through collaboration, partnerships, and a shared vision to uplift communities and empower young people with relevant skills.

Prof Nthambeleni further highlighted the importance of partnerships in driving national development, noting that collaboration with organisations such as the MTN Foundation and Datacomb played a critical role in expanding access to digital education and community empowerment. He went on to affirm that digital competence was no longer optional but essential in today's realities, urging the graduates to continue learning, innovating and applying their knowledge in solving real-world challenges.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal encouraged the graduates to use their skills not only for personal advancement but also to uplift others through mentorship and community development. Concluding his address, Prof Nthambeleni praised the organisers and partners for their dedication, while challenging the graduates to become ambassadors of transformation and contributors to South Africa's digital future.

## Programme Overview: Addressing Youth Unemployment Through Skills Development



Mr Percy Mkhosi, CEO of Datacomb Development Hubs

Mr Percy Mkhosi, the CEO of Datacomb Development Hubs, presented the programme overview and opening remarks. He explained that the Digital Jobs programme was created in response to the growing unemployment challenge partly caused by rapid technological change, which has transformed industries and the nature of work. Mr Mkhosi emphasised that this problem could not be solved without strong partnerships among business, government, communities and institutions. He highlighted how the programme focused on equipping young people with digital skills to bridge the digital divide and enable their meaningful participation in the economy.

To date, Datacomb Development Hubs and MTN have collaborated with higher education institutions across South Africa to ensure that rural and peri-urban youth are not left behind in the digital revolution. The UNIVEN cohort forms part of a growing national movement to build a tech-savvy generation that is capable of competing in regional and global markets.



# MTN Digital Skills for Digital Jobs Graduation Ceremony Celebrated Student Achievement and Digital Empowerment at UNIVEN continued...

## MTN Foundation: A Corporate Commitment to Youth Development



Mr Amukelani Hlungwani, Senior Regional Manager MTN Northern Region

Mr Amukelani Hlungwani the Senior Regional Manager for MTN Northern Region encouraged the graduates to lead with vision and make meaningful contributions to their communities. He reminded them that their journey should not end with the ceremony but begin with the responsibility to become vision-led leaders who make a meaningful impact in their communities and beyond. Mr Hlungwani urged them to reflect on their daily choices and the resources invested in their growth as motivation to strive for excellence. He emphasised that while the occasion was about celebrating academic achievement, it should be treated as an opportunity to renew a shared commitment to social development, community upliftment and building a better future for South Africa and the world.



Mr Lesimola Selepe, Senior Manager for Education and Community Programmes at MTN South Africa Foundation

Delivering the sponsor address, Mr Lesimola Selepe noted that MTN's success comes with a responsibility to give back by investing in young people and communities. He reminded the graduates and attendees that South Africa faced immense socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, inequality and poverty. This was the foundation of MTN's commitment to digital inclusion through access to devices, connectivity and skills development. He revealed that the Foundation relied on 1% of MTN's profits to drive impactful programmes in education and youth empowerment. Mr Selepe added that by closing the digital skills gap and supporting marginalised communities, MTN was helping to build a more inclusive, competitive future for Africa's youth.

## Expanding the Impact: Beyond Training Towards Employment Pathways

A key strength of the DS4DJ programme is its emphasis on employment readiness. Most notable was the revelation that many graduates were already securing employment opportunities in digital marketing, graphic design, IT support, e-commerce and freelance digital services. Also, the programme provides:

- 1) Access to digital job marketplaces
- 2) Entrepreneurship incubation pathways
- 3) Mentorship from industry professionals
- 4) Opportunities for community-based digital service projects

This ensures that learning outcomes translate into real livelihoods and economic participation.

## Graduation Ceremony: A Celebration of Achievement



Some of the graduates receiving certificates during the MTN Digital Skills for Digital Jobs graduation ceremony



The top three graduates of the MTN Digital Skills for Digital Jobs programme pose for a group photo with university leadership, MTN representatives, and other delegates during the graduation ceremony at the University Sports Hall.

**UNIVEN graduates are digitally empowered to innovate, lead, and create opportunities for their communities**

The graduation ceremony formally recognised learners as programme graduates. Certificates were awarded amidst vibrant celebration, punctuated by jubilation and applause. The atmosphere reflected pride, accomplishment and the promise of new beginnings for the young people who completed the intensive digital training programme.

## Vote of Thanks and Appreciation

Dr Agnes Mathaulula expressed deep appreciation of MTN South Africa Foundation, Datacomb Development Hubs, Vhembe District Municipality, University leadership, staff members and all other partners who contributed to the success of the programme.



Dr Agnes Mathaulula, Senior Lecturer in the Institute for Rural Development as she delivered a vote of thanks

## A Vision for the Future: Building a Digitally Inclusive Society

The ceremony reflected UNIVEN's ongoing commitment to youth development, empowerment and community upliftment through innovative learning programmes that respond to national and global technological demands. This initiative demonstrates the impact of collaborative efforts in addressing youth unemployment through skills development. Looking ahead, UNIVEN plans to expand its digital programmes, integrate digital literacy across academic disciplines, and strengthen partnerships that support student employability and entrepreneurship.



# University of Venda's Faculty of Health Sciences and Partners Drive Change Through Isondlo Child Nutrition Programme



Some beneficiaries of Isondlo Food Security Project

The University of Venda (UNIVEN), together with the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund and the Isa Mathivha Foundation, led a two-day community feedback session in Tshimbupfe on 25–26 November 2025. The event reflected on the Isondlo Food Security Project, which supported 500 households and improved child nutrition in the village. It focused on sharing lessons learned, celebrating local resilience, and planning for sustainable, community-led solutions to food security.

Community members spoke with heartfelt gratitude, expressing that the Isondlo Food Security Project has helped their families to survive during difficult times. They praised the efforts of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Isa Mathivha Foundation, and the University of Venda for bringing hope and dignity to households. While celebrating the support received, they made a humble plea for continued assistance, noting that "more food parcels are still needed as many families depend for survival."



Musanda Vho Ntsieni Nemianzwii

Opening the session, Musanda Vho Ntsieni Nemianzwii of Mianzwii Dindela Village of Tshimbupfe, described the day as "a celebration of hope" and proof that "when people come together with shared support, they can lighten up the burden carried by many families." He commended the Isa Mathivha Foundation for its commitment to poverty alleviation and empowerment, adding that "poverty cannot be defeated by a handout; it is defeated through empowering." He urged communities to embrace this support with gratitude and unity.



Ms Pfarelo Mathivha



Prof Lufuno Makhado

When delivering a joint message of support, Ms Pfarelo Mathivha explained that the Isondlo Food Security Project was born from her vision to fight hunger and tackle school dropouts caused by teenage pregnancy. "We should give young people hope and skills for a better future." She stressed that the project goes beyond food parcels to create opportunities for education and empowerment. Prof Lufuno Makhado echoed this commitment, urging continued support for Isa Mathivha Foundation's inclusive approach: "We need to uphold the community-based model that takes everyone on board—children, youth, women, men, and the elderly." Both leaders highlighted the role of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund in making this possible, noting that education and nutrition work together to break cycles of poverty.



Representative of the Chief of Tshimbupfe, Mr NS Netshimbupfe

In his address, Mr NS Netshimbupfe expressed deep gratitude to the Isa Mathivha Foundation, the University of Venda, and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund for their efforts in uplifting the Tshimbupfe community. He urged community members to support every development in the area, as it is intended to benefit the village, the youth, and everyone who belongs there. Emphasising unity and progress, he reminded community members that these initiatives are not just projects but opportunities to transform lives through education, nutrition, and empowerment.



Ms Shadi Nyokong of Nelson Mandela Children's Fund

Ms Shadi Nyokong from the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund celebrated a major milestone, noting that approximately 40,000 people have benefited from this programme through partnerships such as the Isa Mathivha Foundation and the University of Venda. She said the gathering was to celebrate that achievement and to look forward to even better results soon, while expressing sincere appreciation to the Tshimbupfe community for their support.



Ms Mapule Cheela of Nelson Mandela Children's Fund

Additionally, Ms Mapule Cheela from the Sustainable Livelihood Programme highlighted the purpose behind these efforts. She said they are grateful to assist the community so they can rise out of poverty. "Our programme is designed to help people do things on their own, so they can survive and thrive even without our presence."



Prof LF Mushaphi (Faculty of Health Sciences, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning) and Ms K Matshovhane (Lecturer, FHS, Department of Biokinetics, Recreation and Sports Sciences)

The first day was concluded with a report on the research project titled 'Evaluating the Contribution of the Food Security Drive Programme among Beneficiaries and Mapping Out Future Initiatives,' led by Prof. LF Mushaphi and Dr V Mbhatsane. Prof. Mushaphi provided a summary of the findings to the community members and available stakeholders, with an emphasis on the appreciation shared by the beneficiaries. Although some dissatisfactions were also expressed regarding certain items included in the food package.

The Isa Mathivha Foundation, UNIVEN's Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund continued their partnership and community engagement for day 2 at the Tshimbupfe Isa Mathivha Foundation offices. The program focused on engaging local residents, gathering insights, and co-creating actionable steps to sustain nutrition initiatives. Youth voices were central in strengthening participation in health and food security programmes. The program commenced with welcoming remarks from the Program Director, Mrs Ndishavhelafhi Mudau (ISA Mathivha Foundation Board Secretariat), who acknowledged all attendees and extended appreciation to the participating organisations, including the Univen biokinetics team and the Khomanani Health Research Centre. Attendees were encouraged to undergo health screenings throughout the day to monitor their well-being.



# University of Venda's Faculty of Health Sciences and Partners Drive Change Through Isondlo Child Nutrition Programme continued...

Musanda, Mr Ntsieni Nemianzwi, praised the Isa Foundation for its dedication to uplifting the community. He highlighted the foundation's sincere commitment to poverty alleviation, life skills development, and community empowerment. During a time when many households are facing difficulties, the Isa Foundation has chosen to take action rather than ignore these challenges. Their initiatives, especially those focused on skills training and knowledge development, help equip young people, the elderly, and other community members not only to cope but also to thrive. Musanda emphasised that overcoming poverty cannot be achieved through handouts alone; it requires empowerment, education, unity, and long-term capacity building. He recognised the foundation's role in planting the seeds of progress, noting that their positive impact may not be immediately visible but will benefit future generations. Musanda encouraged community members to embrace this support with gratitude and to commit to working together for a better future. He reiterated the importance of uplifting one another, strengthening families, and ensuring the dignity and well-being of every household.



Mr Muryai N, Representative of the Executive Mayor of Vhembe District.

The municipal representative expressed the municipality's commitment to supporting community members who are interested in starting farming businesses. He stated that the municipality is able to provide tractors and other resources to assist with ploughing and to help improve the farming process. He also expressed his gratitude to the Foundation for the significant work they are doing in the community. He emphasised that the municipality endorses and encourages initiatives like this, as they contribute meaningfully to community development and self-sustainability.

During the engagement session, community members who have benefited from the Isondlo Child Nutrition Programme expressed their appreciation for the work of the Isa Foundation. One participant highlighted that the foundation not only caters to children but also provides valuable support to adults. She encouraged fellow community members to continue supporting the foundation's initiatives. Additionally, she commended the founder for the vision and intelligence behind establishing such a meaningful program, emphasizing that it has provided many families with essential support, including basic necessities like bread and butter. Another beneficiary expressed interest in joining the group of women currently involved in the sewing project at the Isa Foundation. She also requested the introduction of sports activities in the Tshimbupfe communities to benefit the community, particularly the youth. Moreover, community members collectively emphasized the importance of recognizing the good work being done by the foundation and acknowledged the support received from various collaborators.



Ceo of FAMRU on Youth engagements in health and food Security

Mr Tshedzuluso Netshimbupfe addressed the gathering about the importance of strengthening food security within the Tshimbupfe communities. He noted that recent contributions from Isondo and Tiger Brands have highlighted the ongoing levels of poverty in the area. He emphasised that meaningful change starts with both traditional leadership and community members, referencing the well-known principle: "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; but if you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." Mr T Netshimbupfe further explained the role of FAMRU, highlighting that the organisation can conduct soil testing to determine whether the land is fertile enough for producing high-quality fruits and vegetables. He emphasised the importance of skill development programs in empowering community members with the knowledge necessary to manage funds effectively and sustain long-term projects. Additionally, he shared insights from his personal journey with FAMRU, which led to opportunities abroad, including a visit to the United Kingdom. During this visit, he was given the platform to teach others about engaging with rural communities. He highlighted that international partners have expressed a willingness to support and bring new opportunities to rural areas, such as the Tshimbupfe communities.



Keynote speaker Mr NS Netshimbupfe with elders, Representing The Chief of Tshimbupfe.

A representative for the Chief of Tshimbupfe, Mr N.S. Netshimbupfe expressed gratitude to all attendees and encouraged community members to seek out opportunities for the Tshimbupfe communities. He praised the contributions of the Isa Foundation and FAMRU in supporting community development. Mr NS Netshimbupfe highlighted key needs within the community, including the need for a borehole to improve water access, funding for a bakery, and opportunities for youth learnerships and internships. He emphasised the importance of skills development programs to empower residents. Additionally, he mentioned that land is available for farming and encouraged more community members to engage in agricultural activities for self-sustainability.



Ms Shadi Nyokong

Ms Shadi Nyokong of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund (NMCF) emphasised the organisation's commitment to promoting Ubuntu and its involvement in various community development projects. She clarified that the term "children" in the organisation's mandate extends beyond just school-going youth to include all members of the community, reflecting NMCF's holistic approach to community support. Ms Nyokong encouraged residents of the Tshimbupfe communities to actively participate in uplifting their neighbourhoods and to work together toward sustainable development. She also reported that approximately 500 families in the Tshimbupfe communities are currently receiving food parcels as part of ongoing support initiatives.

**The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund is committed to promoting Ubuntu and empowering communities through active participation and sustainable support**



Ms P Mathivha, ISA Mathivha Foundation



and Prof L Makhado, UNIVEN

Ms Pfarelo Mathivha, Director of Isa Mathivha Foundation (left), encouraged community members to participate in the foundation's programmes rather than relying solely on food parcels. Prof. L Makhado (right) thanked the funders and the community for their continuous support, emphasising the need for community members' empowerment to increase and promote self-initiated and sustainable community projects.

The two-day event highlighted the significance of partnerships, youth leadership, and community-driven solutions in fostering resilient futures. Engaging discussions were complemented by vibrant cultural performances, showcasing the talents and heritage of our communities, reinforcing the power of collaboration and creativity in achieving sustainable growth and development.





# Leaders Unite at UNIVEN to Champion Disaster Resilience



Some attendees of International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR)

Government leaders, disaster management experts, academics and community representatives gathered at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) on 3 December 2025 for the joint commemoration of the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) under the theme 'Fund Resilience, Not Disasters.' The event, hosted in Thulamela Local Municipality, aimed to strengthen collaboration and promote proactive strategies for disaster risk reduction.



Cllr Athongozwidivha Rambuda, Mayor of Thulamela Local Municipality

Cllr Athongozwidivha Rambuda, Mayor of Thulamela Local Municipality, while delivering opening and welcome remarks, welcomed delegates and international guests, urging active participation. "A disaster is a catastrophic event that exceeds a community's ability to cope," she said, stressing partnerships between government, institutions and communities as the cornerstone of effective disaster management

**Disaster resilience is built through collaboration, planning, and partnerships that empower communities to withstand the unexpected**



Mr Silas Mokgonyana from the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC)

Mr Silas Mokgonyana from the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC) delivered an overview of the 2025 International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (IDDR) for Limpopo Province, highlighted that Limpopo's vulnerability to hazards such as drought, floods, storms and biological threats. "We must invest in disaster risk reduction rather than response," he emphasised, citing the Municipal Systems Act and global frameworks like the Sendai Framework. His message was clear: proactive planning, capacity building and dedicated funding are essential for resilience.



Cllr Freda Nkondo, Executive Mayor of Vhembe District

Cllr Freda Nkondo, Executive Mayor of Vhembe District, delivered a compelling keynote address under the theme 'Fund Resilience, Not Disasters.' She urged all spheres of government and stakeholders to prioritise prevention over reactive spending, stating: "When we choose to fund resilience, we choose life, livelihoods, stability and hope over loss, pain and regret." Nkondo highlighted that disaster risk reduction must be embedded in municipal planning and budgets, guided by the Disaster Management Act and global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework.

She outlined four priorities for action: understanding risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and enhancing preparedness, emphasising that these are "not lofty ideals, but a roadmap for action."

Calling for collaboration across sectors, Nkondo stressed that, "Government alone cannot achieve this shift. We need municipalities, traditional leaders, civil society, the private sector and youth to act together." She urged municipalities to integrate risk reduction into every Integrated Development Plan and prioritise infrastructure maintenance, while encouraging communities and businesses to adopt risk-informed practices. Nkondo also highlighted progress through partnerships with universities and NGOs and noted South Africa's leadership on resilience at the global level. Concluding with a strong appeal, she said, "Let this day mark a turning point. If we act now, we will save lives, protect livelihoods and build safer, more prosperous communities."



Cynthia Nonjola from the National Disaster Management Centre

Cynthia Nonjola from the National Disaster Management Centre delivered a thought-provoking presentation on "Strengthening Infrastructure Resilience Against Climate Extremes." she tackled the urgent need for climate-proof infrastructure. "We keep pumping money into response instead of prevention. If we invested in preparedness, we would save billions," she said, citing disasters like the Umtata floods and the George building collapse as preventable failures. Her solution: strict building codes, multi-hazard planning and nature-based approaches. "Resilience is not a cost; it's an investment in continuity and community."

## Panel Discussion:



Ms Humbulani Lekgonono



Prof Eduard Stam



Mr Tonderai Makoni

The panel discussions featured leading experts who explored innovative approaches to disaster risk reduction. The first session, led by Ms Humbulani Lekgonono, examined the use of geospatial analysis to mitigate urban flood risks in Durban. Meanwhile, Ms Mudzielwana assessed the environmental impacts of landform instability and soil degradation in Thengwe Village. The second panel included Prof E. Stam, who warned that "Disasters often result from neglect," and Mr T. Makoni, who presented on building climate resilience through community-based river health monitoring in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve. Collectively, these discussions emphasised integrated spatial planning, biophilic design, and community engagement as key strategies for reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience.



## Leaders Unite at UNIVEN to Champion Disaster Resilience continued..



Dr Ntshaheni Mudau



Mr Mukundi Nekhavhambe



Dr Florence Murungweni

The partnerships and collaborations session highlighted the role of multi-sectoral engagement in disaster risk reduction. Dr Ntshaheni Mudau explored how social structures influence risk reduction in Vhembe and Mopani Districts, while Dr Florence Murungweni evaluated flood risk vulnerability in off-campus student residences. Further contributions by Mr Mukundi Nekhavhambe



Ms Kelly Tshiambaro

focused on drought adaptation strategies in Musina, and Ms Kelly Tshiambaro presented flood-prone area mapping for Thulamela local municipality. The session reinforced that partnerships between municipalities, academia, civil society, and local communities are essential for implementing risk-informed development and fostering sustainable resilience.



Dr Florence Murungweni, Head of Geography and Environmental Sciences

Dr Florence Murungweni, Head of Geography and Environmental Sciences, closed the conference by summarising key insights and presenting ten resolutions aimed at embedding resilience into development. She stressed the need to link disaster risk reduction with planning, integrate climate adaptation, and involve all stakeholders, noting: "If we act now, we can all live a life of dignity." The adopted resolutions call for prioritising investments in risk reduction, incorporating green infrastructure into urban planning, strengthening environmental management, institutionalising eco-centric approaches, expanding community-based monitoring, recognising indigenous knowledge, enhancing flood and drought preparedness through GIS mapping and climate-smart agriculture, adopting climate-proof design standards, and fostering partnerships among government, academia, NGOs, and communities.

Murungweni concluded by urging stronger intergovernmental coordination aligned with global DRR frameworks and continuous education: "Let us move from words to action and ensure resilience becomes the foundation of our development."



Prof Lutendo Murulana, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture

In his vote of thanks message, Prof Lutendo Murulana, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture reminded attendees that the resolutions we have adopted must translate into impact. "We cannot do this alone; partnerships are key." He reaffirmed the UNIVEN's commitment to collaboration and urged all participants to travel safely.

## University of Venda Collaborates with Mogalakwena Municipality to Combat Gender-Based Violence



Prof Tsoaledi Thobejane engages with community leaders during the GBV awareness meeting in Mogalakwena Municipality

The University of Venda (UNIVEN), through Prof Tsoaledi Thobejane, participated in a community awareness initiative aimed at addressing gender-based violence (GBV), a critical issue affecting South Africa and the world at large. The community meeting, held on 18 November 2025, was a joint effort by the Mahwelereng Victim Support Centre and the Mogalakwena Municipality, located in the Waterberg District.

The event focused on the urgent need to combat GBV, with participants calling for stricter measures against perpetrators of gender-based violence and femicide. Local organisations, government departments, and civil society groups united in solidarity with victims of this pervasive scourge.

During the event, a representative from the Mahwelereng Victim Support Centre shared concerning research statistics, noting that

the Waterberg District has recorded the highest number of GBV cases in Limpopo, with Mogalakwena Municipality at the top of the list. As the keynote speaker, Prof Thobejane highlighted global GBV trends, noting that one in three women experience gender-based violence worldwide, with nearly 800 million women affected. Additionally, close to 26% of women and girls aged 15 and above have faced similar challenges. In 2023, approximately 85,900 women were killed globally due to patriarchal-related violence.

The meeting also addressed the issue of the "patriarchal dividend," where women often refrain from reporting abusive partners for fear of losing financial support. Chiefs and other traditional leaders attending the event emphasised this as a significant setback in the fight against GBV.



Professor Thobejane encouraged organisations to collaborate with the University by sharing GBV-related data, allowing perpetrators to be named and shamed publicly. He reaffirmed UNIVEN's zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence, emphasising the institution's responsibility to lead with courage, compassion, and accountability.

Through such collaborative efforts, the University of Venda and Mogalakwena Municipality aim to create a safer, more equitable community and set a precedent for GBV prevention and accountability across South Africa.



# Successful Oath-Taking Ceremony for Future Health Professionals

The Faculty of Health Sciences successfully held the Oath-Taking Ceremony for final-year students. This ceremony took place on 23 November 2023 at the University Auditorium. The ceremony marked a significant milestone in the academic journey of students graduating in Nursing, Nutrition, and Psychology, as they formally committed themselves to ethical professional conduct and service to humanity.



*Dr Johannes Gogome Tshifularo, when delivering a keynote address*

Dr Johannes Gogome Tshifularo delivered a keynote address and described the oath-taking ceremony as more than a formal ritual, calling it a powerful moment of transition from student life to professional responsibility and a lifelong commitment to saving lives. He explained that the oath symbolised a sacred pledge to humanity founded on integrity, service and compassion, reminding graduates that they are entering a noble lineage of healers entrusted with protecting life and dignity.

Addressing the different disciplines, Dr Tshifularo referred to nurses as the "heartbeat of healthcare," psychologists as "healers of the unseen," and nutritionists as "guardians of nourishment." He urged graduates to practise with excellence, humility and respect for all patients regardless of background, stressing that "medicine is not only in the syringe, but also in the smile." He concluded by encouraging the Class of 2025 to go forth as healers, protectors and change-makers, guided by knowledge, sustained by compassion and anchored by ethical practice.

**In taking the oath, graduates join a noble lineage of professionals entrusted with protecting life and dignity, guided always by compassion**



*Prof Frederick Veldman during the opening remarks*

Manager: Special Projects in the Office of the DVC: Teaching and Learning, Prof Frederick Veldman emphasised that the ceremony was more than just a formal occasion, describing it as the beginning of a journey that would see graduates save lives and make meaningful contributions to society. He expressed heartfelt appreciation to parents and guardians for the unwavering support they had given the students throughout their studies, and congratulated the graduates for their dedication, resilience and hard work in reaching this important milestone.



The oath-taking ceremony was conducted with dignity and professionalism, beginning with students from the Diploma in Nursing and Bachelor of Nursing programmes led by Dr Takalani Mbedzi, followed by the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition led by Dr Cloupas Mahopo, and the Bachelor of Psychology led by Ms Mosima Phadu.



*Future nurses, nutritionists, and psychologists of the Class of 2025 take the sacred oath, committing themselves to ethical practice and service to humanity*



## Successful Oath-Taking Ceremony for Future Health Professionals continued...



Hope Siaga, delivering response on behalf of all students

Hope Siaga from the Department of Nutrition expressed sincere appreciation to the faculty leadership, academic staff and parents for their unwavering support throughout the students' academic journey, noting that the Class of 2025's success was built on discipline, compassion and collective effort. She acknowledged the vital role played by classmates across Nursing,

Psychology and Nutrition, emphasising that their achievement reflected the strength of unity and shared purpose.

Highlighting health sciences as a calling rather than merely a career, she illustrated how nurses, psychologists and nutritionists collectively safeguard human wellbeing from pregnancy to old age. She urged her peers to serve with honesty, integrity, respect and a commitment to lifelong learning, before encouraging the Class of 2025 to rise with courage and gratitude as agents of change dedicated to building a healthier and more compassionate society.

**Nurses, psychologists and nutritionists stand together as protectors of life, dignity and holistic wellbeing**



Dr Julia Mafumo delivering a vote of thanks

Dr Julia Mafumo congratulated the Class of 2025, acknowledging their hard work, determination, and dedication across all departments in the faculty, especially in nursing where students returned exhausted from practicals yet gave their all. She thanked parents and guardians for their unwavering support and sacrifices, the team, student representative Hope Seaga for exemplifying commitment to moral and ethical standards, and partners in clinical and practical training for supporting the students' development.

She concluded by emphasising the importance of ethics, empathy, and professionalism in healthcare, encouraging graduates to live up to their oath and continue making a positive impact in the community.

The oath-taking ceremony not only symbolised professional accountability but also reaffirmed the University's mission of producing ethical, community-centred and competent health professionals. At UNIVEN, we continue to shape graduates who are not only professionally competent but also deeply committed to improving the health and wellbeing of society.

**Our graduates step forward not only with competence, but with a profound duty to uplift the communities they serve**



Future nurses of the Class of 2025 proudly pose together after taking their professional oath, ready to serve with compassion and dedication



Graduating nutritionists of the Class of 2025 celebrating their commitment to safeguarding health and promoting wellbeing



Psychology graduates of the Class of 2025 gather after taking the oath, embracing their role as healers of the mind and champions of mental health



# G20 Broadcast Highlights Just Energy Transition Insights from Dr Tshifhiwa Ranwaha on Renewable Integration and Innovation



Dr Tshifhiwa Ranwaha was selected by the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP) to participate in an interview on the G20 Broadcast, where he shared expert insights on South Africa's Just Energy Transition as a young leader in the energy sector. The interview was recorded on 20 November, and continued on 21 November 2025, during the SABC News programme broadcast on SABC Plus.

The global shift towards clean and sustainable energy took centre stage in this televised discussion, with Dr Ranwaha providing an in-depth perspective on South Africa's progress, challenges, and opportunities within the broader G20 framework aimed at accelerating renewable-energy deployment and international technological collaboration.

His contributions, which ranged from renewable-infrastructure planning to energy-efficiency innovations and policy perspectives, continue to influence national and international conversations on climate action and energy sector reform.

## Understanding the Barriers to Large-Scale Renewable Adoption

Dr Ranwaha outlined persistent challenges hindering the widespread integration of solar, wind, and green-hydrogen technologies into South Africa's energy mix. He emphasised the issue of intermittency, noting that solar power generation is most effective during hot summer months but declines significantly in winter and overcast conditions. When combined with South Africa's high energy demand, these fluctuations mean renewable sources alone are not yet sufficient to reliably sustain the national grid.

He further pointed to regulatory delays, particularly in the licensing of independent power producers, as another major constraint. Such delays prevent some producers from feeding electricity into the national grid, reducing the overall contribution of renewables to national energy supply.

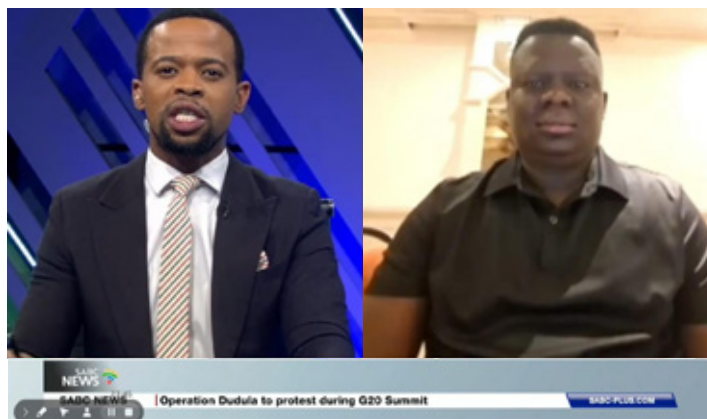
## Emerging Technologies Advancing the Energy Transition

Discussing innovative energy solutions, Dr Ranwaha highlighted the critical role of advanced battery systems, green-hydrogen storage, nuclear fusion research, and carbon-capture technologies.

He explained that carbon capture enables accurate emissions tracking across different regions, an essential tool for meeting South Africa's target of reducing carbon emissions by 50% by 2030. Battery and hydrogen-storage technologies were identified as key mechanisms for stabilising the grid, allowing surplus renewable energy to be stored and used during periods of reduced generation.

## Modernising the National Grid for a Renewable Future

Dr Ranwaha stressed that modernising the electricity grid must begin with simplifying licensing processes for independent power producers. He warned that complex regulatory procedures discourage producers from feeding energy into the national grid, instead limiting renewable electricity use to private or household consumption, which is not reflected in national renewable-energy targets.



He further emphasised the need for large-scale storage solutions, including rechargeable megawatt-scale batteries and hydrogen-storage infrastructure, to ensure long-term energy security as renewable integration expands.

## Strengthening International Cooperation on Energy Innovation

Reflecting on South Africa's collaboration with international partners such as France, Dr Ranwaha highlighted the importance of global cooperation in accelerating the country's energy transition. He noted that countries with advanced renewable-energy technologies provide platforms for knowledge exchange, research partnerships, and student exchange programmes. These collaborations, he said, enhance skills development and support the local adoption of cutting-edge technologies.

## Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Energy Efficiency

Addressing the increasing role of artificial intelligence in energy systems, Dr Ranwaha explained that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already being used within South Africa's renewable-energy sector. He described AI as a vital tool for predictive maintenance, real-time performance optimisation, and improved grid reliability.

He also addressed public concerns about job displacement, clarifying that AI relies heavily on human input, including data provision, system training, and expert oversight. Rather than replacing workers, AI presents opportunities for job creation and skills development. He encouraged South Africans to acquire AI-related competencies to remain competitive in an evolving job market.

## Addressing Fears Around Job Losses in the Age of AI

Dr Ranwaha reiterated that AI technologies function through human knowledge and supervision, generating new job roles instead of eliminating employment opportunities.

He emphasised that with proper upskilling, workers can enhance productivity and job security, reaffirming that AI is designed to augment human capability, not replace it.

## Continental Renewable-Energy Roadmap Still in Development

Commenting on the development of a G20-aligned African renewable-energy roadmap, Dr Ranwaha indicated that discussions are ongoing at a continental level. A final framework is expected to emerge following future summits. In the interim, stakeholders are encouraged to monitor developments as negotiations continue to unfold.

## Inspiring the Next Generation of Scientists

In closing, Dr Ranwaha urged young scientists to embrace technological change and global innovation. He emphasised the importance of developing skills in artificial intelligence, digital systems, and green-energy technologies. The shift from traditional energy models to sustainable solutions, he concluded, requires a workforce that is innovative, adaptable, and prepared for the demands of the future.

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