



University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



Issue 67 | 18 March 2026

Human Rights from the Ground Up: Advancing Community Justice in South Africa



Mr Victor Mavhidula, Provincial manager, South African Human Rights Commission, Limpopo Provincial Office

In commemoration of Human Rights Day, the Ismail Mahomed Centre for Human and Peoples' Rights at the University of Venda hosted a public lecture on 12 March 2026 at the Research Conference Centre under the theme "Human Rights from Below: Achieving Rights for True Community Development in South Africa." The event featured a keynote address by Victor Mavhidula, Provincial Manager of the South African Human Rights Commission in Limpopo, who highlighted the importance of grassroots participation and community-driven initiatives in advancing the realisation of human

rights and sustainable development. The lecture brought together students, academics and community members to engage in dialogue on practical strategies for promoting social justice and empowering local communities, emphasising the crucial role of both citizens and institutions in strengthening human rights from the ground up.

Delivering the keynote lecture, Mavhidula encouraged the audience to reflect on the origins and meaning of human rights by posing questions such as, "What rights do people have and where

do these rights come from?" and "Who gets to make decisions for others and on what basis?" He traced the historical foundations of the rule of law, citing the signing of the Magna Carta, which marked an important step in limiting the abuse of political power. Mavhidula also emphasised the role of cooperation in human progress, noting that "the reason why we survive is because we cooperate." Reflecting on South Africa's history, he explained that apartheid deliberately

divided communities so that people "are not united." He further reminded the audience that the struggle for rights came at great cost, including the Sharpeville Massacre, where "69 people were shot dead." He concluded by stressing that development is closely linked to the protection of rights, stating that "you can't develop any community without giving them their rights."



(L-R) Mrs Zama Mopai, Prof Ademola Oluborode Jegede, Mr Victor Mavhidula, and Dr Tondani Nethengwe during the Question and Comments session

Just after the keynote lecture, a discussion focused on the progress and challenges of human rights protection in South Africa, about 30 years after the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa was adopted by the Constitutional Assembly and signed into law. Participants raised concerns about common human rights complaints, particularly among youth, including access to education, abuse,

disability discrimination, and lack of basic services such as water. The Human Rights Commission emphasised the importance of public education, community engagement, and accountability, while acknowledging ongoing challenges such as corruption, limited resources, land ownership issues, and the need to balance development with the preservation of cultural and traditional systems.



Dr Tondani Nethengwe, Head of the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Venda

The programme began with a welcome address by Dr Tondani Nethengwe, who recognised representatives from South African universities, colleagues, students, and guests. She welcomed participants to the public lecture organised by the Ismail Mahomed Centre for Human and Peoples' Rights as part of the commemoration of Human Rights Day. In her remarks, she highlighted the university's commitment to promoting dialogue on issues of justice and human rights, noting that the lecture forms part of the institution's efforts "to promote critical dialogue, academic engagement and community awareness on issues of human rights and justice." She further emphasised that the university aims to

develop responsible citizens who understand the importance of "human rights, dignity, equality and justice in a democratic society." Dr Nethengwe also welcomed the keynote speaker and underscored the relevance of the lecture's theme, explaining that human rights should not remain theoretical concepts but must become "lived realities for communities on the ground." She concluded by encouraging meaningful engagement among students, academics and community members, expressing confidence that the lecture would inspire participants to contribute to "a more just and equitable society."



Prof Ademola Oluborode Jegede, Director of the Ismail Mahomed Centre for Human and Peoples' Rights and DSTI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Climate Change and the Rule of Law (CCRL).

Opening remarks were delivered by Prof Ademola Oluborode Jegede, who acknowledged the presence of colleagues, students, and guests and thanked participants for attending despite the challenging weather conditions. Prof Jegede reflected on the broader context of the lecture, noting that the year's Human Rights Day theme, "Bill of Rights at 30: Making Human Dignity Real," marks thirty years since the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. He explained that the lecture topic encourages reflection on the meaning of "human rights from below," focusing on whether rights are genuinely realised at the community level, where

development matters most. According to him, South Africa's history of racial discrimination under apartheid continues to influence present inequalities. He emphasised that the concept calls for prioritising the needs of marginalised communities and ensuring their active involvement in development processes. The theme also highlights issues such as poverty, inequality, and access to services, noting that "poverty is a significant barrier to community development." He encouraged participants to reflect on the realities faced by communities today and to consider the most pressing human rights challenges at local levels.



Dr Mantwa Madiba from the Department of Private and Mercantile Law

Dr Mantwa Madiba proposed a vote of thanks, expressing appreciation to all who contributed to the success of the lecture and thanked the keynote speaker for his insightful presentation. Reflecting on the discussions of the day, she emphasised the importance of historical awareness, stating that “it’s important for us to know where we come from so that we can understand where

these rights were actually established.” She also highlighted the need to sustain dialogue on human rights, noting that “we need to continue the discussion about human rights.” Dr Madiba concluded by acknowledging the organisers, staff, students and participants whose contributions ensured a successful and meaningful public lecture.



University of Venda Launches SAIGA Student Chapter to Strengthen Public Sector Accountability



Ms Mbali Buthelezi, SAIGA CEO

The University of Venda's Department of Accountancy recently hosted the official launch of the South African Institute of Government Auditors (SAIGA) Student Chapter. The event brought together academic staff, students, media representatives and the SAIGA delegation to celebrate a new partnership aimed at preparing students for careers in public sector auditing and governance. The programme included addresses from university leadership and SAIGA representatives, highlighting opportunities for students to engage with the professional body and contribute to ethical leadership in South Africa's public sector.

Ms Mbali Buthelezi addressed students on the importance of ethical leadership and accountability in strengthening South Africa's public sector. She explained that SAIGA distinguishes itself from other professional bodies by focusing specifically on governance, auditing and accountability within government institutions. Ms Buthelezi encouraged students to reflect carefully on their career paths and consider how they can contribute to public service. She emphasised that professionals in this field play a crucial role in protecting public resources, challenging unethical practices and ensuring that government decisions benefit communities.



Prof Freddy Munzhelele, Head of Department of Accountancy

Speaking on behalf of the Office of the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law (FMCL), Prof Freddy Munzhelele emphasised that the university's growth is driven by its students and stakeholders who contribute to teaching, research, innovation, and community engagement. He highlighted the expansion of the Department of Accountancy through increased enrolment, growing partnerships with professional bodies and preparations for SAICA accreditation of the Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting, while encouraging students to

participate actively in the student chapter for networking and professional development.

He noted that the Department of Accountancy is the largest in the faculty and stressed the importance of strengthening collaboration with professional bodies such as SAIGA through research partnerships, academic exchanges, guest lectures and professional development initiatives that benefit both students and the public sector.



Mrs Caroline Tshikhovhokhovho, Senior Lecturer & Subject Head - Taxation

Mrs Caroline Tshikhovhokhovho noted that the Department of Accountancy embarked on a strategic journey to strengthen its programmes through partnerships with professional bodies, which resulted in accreditation with SAIGA in 2023. According to her, the accreditation

confirms that the department's curriculum is relevant and aligned with industry needs, particularly within the public sector, and the student chapter will help prepare future professionals committed to accountability and ethical leadership.



Mr Lucas Mabona, from SAIGA's Officer for Strategic Partnership and Growth

Mr Lucas Mabona outlined the organisation's mandate to expand its professional footprint and strengthen the pipeline for the Registered Government Auditor (RGA) designation. He explained that SAIGA collaborates with universities such as the University of Venda to encourage students to pursue careers in public sector auditing and financial management.

Through partnerships with institutions including the Auditor-General, National Treasury and accredited training offices, SAIGA offers graduates a three-year competency-based traineeship that combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience to produce ethically grounded professionals.



Mr Kalushi Sekgoka, from SAIGA's Officer of Marketing and Membership

Mr Kalushi Sekgoka emphasised the value of SAIGA membership for students and young professionals. He described students as future leaders who will advance ethical standards and professionalism in public sector auditing. Mr Sekgoka explained the different membership

categories available, affiliate, student, graduate and RGA membership. He highlighted the benefits of joining the organisation, including networking opportunities, mentorship, career development support and access to traineeship opportunities.



Ms Sinazo Mondo, representing SAIGA's Media and Administration Unit, SAICA

Ms Sinazo Mondo guided students through the process of registering for membership and participating in the newly established student chapter. She explained that students can complete registration by scanning the provided QR code and submitting documents such as identification, a curriculum vitae

and their academic qualifications. She also encouraged students to contribute articles to SAIGA's publication Auditing SA, particularly in the "Student Corner", where they can share insights on auditing, accounting, finance and current affairs while building their professional profiles.



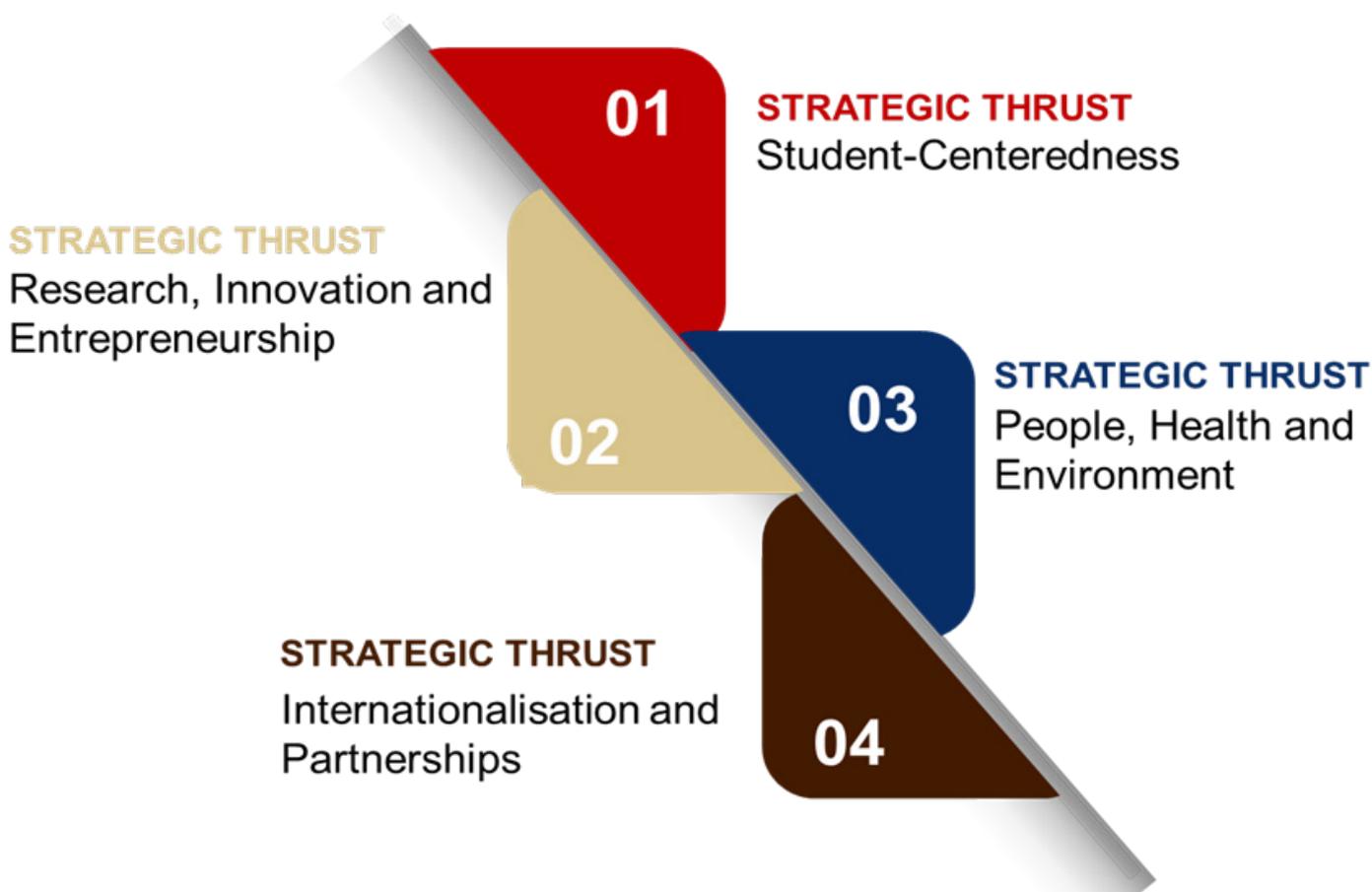
Mr Thilivhali Ramawa, Senior Lecturer - Auditing

Mr Thilivhali Ramawa expressed appreciation to SAIGA for travelling to the University of Venda. He noted that the visit reassured students that meaningful professional opportunities are accessible at the university and encouraged

them to engage with SAIGA representatives and take advantage of the partnership as they prepare for future careers in auditing and public sector governance.



Did you know that the UNIVEN Strategic Plan 2026-2030 has four Strategic Thrusts listed below?



NEW VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION AND MISSION

"Vision is the art of seeing the invisible"
~ Jonathan Swift

Our vision defines what we want to become by 2040. It is an aspirational description of what we would like to achieve in the long term.



VISION

A University leading in engaged scholarship



MISSION

The University of Venda produces graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive

INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

The University of Venda is guided by a set of core institutional values that shape its culture, inform decision-making, and underpin the university's strategic priorities. These values include:

 EXCELLENCE Striving for the highest standards in teaching, research, and service	 INTEGRITY Acting with honesty, ethics, and transparency in all we do	 ACCOUNTABILITY Taking responsibility for our actions and delivering on our commitments	 DIVERSITY Embracing and promoting inclusivity, equity, and different perspectives	 RESPECT Valuing the dignity and contributions of every individual
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POSITIONING STATEMENT

Positioning the University of Venda for Relevance, Excellence and Impact