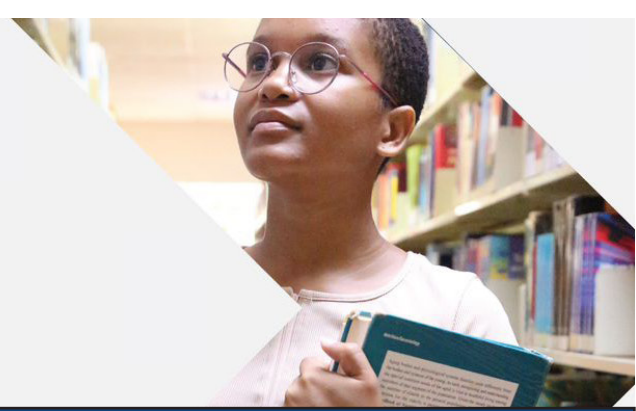




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



ISSUE 08 | 30 October 2024

Empowering Futures: Professor Lufuno Makhado Joins the Expert Group on Adolescent Well-being Investment Case!



Prof Lufuno Makhado's appointment to the Expert Group on the Adolescent Well-being Investment Case is a significant milestone for adolescent health initiatives. His inclusion in this esteemed group, convened by the World Health Organisation, the National Department of Health, and the Presidency of South Africa, is a testament to his notable expertise and unwavering commitment to improving adolescent health and well-being.

The Expert Group, with its unwavering dedication to advancing initiatives for adolescent health, is committed to two critical areas: establishing the National Adolescent Health and Well-being Forum and creating a comprehensive toolkit for investment in adolescent well-being.

Prof Makhado's extensive background in adolescent health is expected to

play a vital role in shaping these initiatives, which build on the Adolescent Well-being Framework initiated in 2020. As a member and a key contributor, he will be responsible for actively designing the investment case and leading the collaboration with various stakeholders, including government entities, academic institutions, United Nations (UN) agencies, and civil society organisations.

Prof Lufuno Makhado's research and professional expertise align with the objectives of the Expert Group on Adolescent Well-Being. He focuses on community health, HIV/TB management, sexual and reproductive health, and psychosocial care, all crucial for improving adolescent well-being. His work addresses critical issues such as HIV management, trauma care, and gender-based violence. Additionally, he strengthens health systems in underserved communities and promotes sexual and reproductive health education to encourage safe practices and provide support for vulnerable adolescents.

His academic work, professional roles, and research focus offer strong synergies with the Expert Group on Adolescent Well-Being goals, creating a coherent and robust team addressing the multidimensional aspects of adolescent health, education, and social challenges.

Prof Makhado expressed, "As an appointee to the Expert Group on Adolescent Well-Being, I am honoured to advance the health and well-being of young people while enhancing the University of Venda's visibility and impact.

This role offers a strategic opportunity to expand our collaborations and partnerships, both locally and globally, in key areas like sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and integrated healthcare services. My focus is to position our university and the Department of Public Health as leaders in addressing the needs of adolescents in underserved communities in South Africa and on a global scale. Together, through innovative research and evidence-based interventions, we can build stronger health systems, empower adolescents, and create a healthier future for all." He also expressed gratitude to all his support systems, including his wife, advisors, mentors, the Department of Public Health, and the University of Venda for their unwavering support and encouragement.

Prof Makhado's appointment marks a significant step forward in enhancing the health and well-being of adolescents in South Africa. It will undoubtedly contribute to developing impactful strategies in this vital area.

On behalf of the University the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza said she is excited to hear about Prof Makhado's appointment to the Expert Group on Adolescent Well-being Investment Case! "This is a significant recognition of your expertise and dedication to improving the lives of young people. Your insights and leadership will undoubtedly make a lasting impact on the well-being of adolescents. I am excited to see how your contributions will shape policies and initiatives in this vital area. Congratulations once again on this well-deserved achievement!"

Enhancing International Collaboration: UNIVEN's Commitment to Comprehensive Internationalisation

From October 21 to 24, 2024, representatives from the University of Venda (UNIVEN) participated in strategic discussions with counterparts from the University Colleges Leuven-Limburg (UCLL) in Belgium and The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) in the Netherlands. This initiative showcased the transformative potential of international partnerships in higher education, aimed at fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. These efforts reflect UNIVEN's steadfast commitment to achieving comprehensive internationalisation.

The UNIVEN delegation included Mr Azwidowi Mukheli, Director of Student Affairs; Adv Eric Nemukula, Director of Legal Services; Mr Thanyani Mphephu, Head of Legal Services; Ms Sephiwe Lubisi, Head of Legal Services; Mr Mfaniseni Mnguni, Chief Clerk Hostel Warden; and Mr Thabo Dikgale, Partnership Officer for International Relations and Partnerships. Together, they brought diverse perspectives essential for addressing institutional objectives and developing mutual growth strategies. The sessions underscored UNIVEN's dedication to broadening its academic and cultural horizons, aligning with its vision to enhance educational quality and global competitiveness.

Key Goals of the Strategic Sessions included:
Exploring Partnership Models: Participants evaluated various partnership models in academic exchange, research collaboration, and dual-degree programmes. Enhancing Student and Staff Mobility: The discussions aimed to identify pathways for student exchanges, internship opportunities, and short-term staff visits.



UNIVEN Delegation at the University Colleges Leuven-Limburg (UCLL), Belgium

Developing Legal Frameworks for Collaboration: The focus was on establishing clear agreements to safeguard institutional rights, promote mutual benefit, and ensure legal compliance in collaborative projects. **Advancing Student Affairs:** The teams shared practices and strategies to improve student life, wellness, and academic success.

Throughout the four-day session, discussions encompassed a wide range of topics designed to support sustainable and long-term partnerships.

Focus Areas of the Collaboration were on the following: **International Relations and Partnership Development:** Representatives explored innovative approaches to building global partnerships. UNIVEN shared its internationalisation strategies, while UCLL and THUAS offered insights from their extensive networks. Topics included co-hosting conferences, collaborative research projects, and curriculum development aimed at enhancing global competencies. A notable outcome was an invitation for UNIVEN to join global scientific networks represented by THUAS.

Student Affairs and Well-being: Sessions on student affairs highlighted the importance of well-being and support services. The teams discussed strategies to improve access to mental health resources, promote inclusivity, and create enriching co-curricular programmes. UNIVEN aimed to adopt best practices observed at UCLL and THUAS, including student-led community initiatives supported by Student Affairs.

Legal Agreements and Compliance: The legal teams collaborated to develop templates for partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding (MoUs), and research contracts. With increasing regulatory demands in higher education, they emphasised risk management, intellectual property rights, and ethical considerations in research, laying a solid legal foundation for future collaborations. Additionally, UNIVEN was granted permission to explore an in-house digital solution for managing contracts.



UNIVEN delegation at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), Netherlands

The strategic sessions between UNIVEN, UCLL, and THUAS highlighted the transformative potential of international partnerships in higher education. By pooling expertise and resources, these institutions are well-positioned to drive impactful collaborations. For UNIVEN, this marks a significant milestone in its internationalisation journey, aligning with its mission to deliver world-class education and opportunities for its community. As these institutions move toward implementation, the collaboration promises to enrich students' educational experiences, expand research horizons, and create a robust, legally sound framework for global academic engagement.

Green Technology Confucius Institute Expands its Reach in Limpopo

Since its establishment in December 2023, the Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI) has made significant strides in promoting Chinese

language education and cultural activities at the University of Venda (UNIVEN). In October 2024, GTCI marked an exciting new chapter

by opening several teaching sites across Limpopo, catering to children, teenagers, and adults in local communities.



New Beginnings at UNIVEN Experimental Kindergarten

On 01 October 2024, GTCI inaugurated a new teaching site at the UNIVEN Experimental Kindergarten. The launch ceremony was attended by key figures including Thabo Dikgale, Partnerships Officer at UNIVEN, Rudzani Mamphweli, Community Engagement Officer, and Prof Grace Ge, Co-Director of GTCI. The initiative introduced Chinese language classes to 40 local children and Kindergarten staff.

Prof Ge expressed her gratitude to UNIVEN Experimental Kindergarten for welcoming GTCI into their educational framework, emphasising the importance of collaboration in enriching children's learning experiences. Thabo Dikgale praised GTCI for its role in strengthening the partnership between UNIVEN and Hubei University of Science and Technology (HUBUT), which has broadened access to the Chinese language for local learners.

On 06 October 2024, GTCI held discussions with representatives from the South African Police Service (SAPS) in Limpopo, the Community Policing Forum (CPF), and the Chinese Community and Police Co-operation Center. The focus was on establishing a Chinese language teaching site for police officers in Polokwane.



L-R: Ted Xiong, Kgasago Frans, Monica Thembi Hadebe, Grace Ge, Eric Maluta

The meeting concluded with an agreement to create a specialised Chinese language training programme for SAPS officers, aiming to enhance their multilingual capabilities. This initiative will involve 40 selected officers from various police stations in Limpopo, who will participate in comprehensive training sessions designed to improve their communication skills and operational effectiveness.



On 08 October 2024, GTCI launched another teaching site at Marude Secondary School. The ceremony was attended by school officials, including Principal Mr Alex Muthelo, alongside GTCI representatives. This initiative will see 108 Grade 8 learners embark on a journey to learn Chinese, with the programme extending throughout their secondary education.

Prof Ge highlighted the collaboration's significance in enriching language education within the Vhembe District. This partnership aims to enhance cultural exchange and mutual understanding among diverse communities, ultimately fostering a more globally aware and multilingual populace.

UNIVEN prioritises local relevance in its mission, and as the sole Chinese language institution in Limpopo, GTCI is dedicated to benefiting local communities. Looking ahead, GTCI will continue to engage actively with these communities, promoting multilingual education and cultural exchanges. By doing so, it aims to enrich the lives of both UNIVEN students and local communities through language and cultural initiatives, as well as through the transfer of green technology knowledge.

Through these efforts, GTCI is not only enhancing educational opportunities but also fostering a spirit of cooperation and understanding that will contribute to the prosperity and development of the Limpopo region.