

CATHSNEWS

www.cathsseta.org.za

APRIL 2026 | ISSUE 08



Inside this issue:

Unlocking potential through skills: CATHSSETA at Worldskills 2026

From Limpopo to India: CATHSSETA celebrates Chef Malebo's top 10 triumph

Tourism Action Lab Launched to Accelerate Youth Employment in the Tourism Sector

Strengthening Skills Development Through DG Workshops

University of Mpumalanga propels graduates onto the global stage as young, gifted and black excellence shine

Meet Dr Tebogo Umanah Executive Manager: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

Walking in the footsteps of King Moshoeshoe !



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





TABLE OF CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 03 | EDITOR'S NOTE | 11 | STRENGTHENING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DG WORKSHOPS |
| 04 | UNLOCKING POTENTIAL THROUGH SKILLS: CATHSSETA AT WORLDSKILLS 2026 | 13 | UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA PROPELS GRADUATES ONTO THE GLOBAL STAGE AS YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK EXCELLENCE SHINE |
| 07 | FROM LIMPOPO TO INDIA: CATHSSETA CELEBRATES CHEF MALEBO'S TOP 10 TRIUMPH | 15 | EXECUTIVE MANAGER: RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION |
| 09 | TOURISM ACTION LAB LAUNCHED TO ACCELERATE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR | 17 | WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF KING MOSHOESHOE ! |



EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue also highlights the strategic efforts underway to address one of our country's most pressing challenges: youth unemployment. The launch of the Tourism Action Lab by the Department of Tourism signifies a renewed, collaborative commitment to creating sustainable employment opportunities.

Beyond our borders, the University of Mpumalanga's international mobility programme showcased the importance of global exposure in developing well-rounded, future-ready graduates. It serves as a reminder that by intentionally expanding access, we can transform lives and create new opportunities for young people across our nation.

At the core of all these initiatives is a commitment to evidence-based impact, which we explore through our profile of Dr Tebogo Umanah. Her leadership in research, monitoring and evaluation reinforces the importance of data-driven decision-making to ensure that the SETA's programmes remain relevant, effective, and transformative.

As you engage with this issue, we invite you to reflect on the collective progress being made across our sectors. Each story serves as a reminder that skills development is not merely a mandate; it is a catalyst for dignity, opportunity, and national growth.

Together, we are not only preparing individuals for the future of work, but we are shaping an inclusive, dynamic, and proudly South African future.

Enjoy the read!

In this issue, we celebrate a powerful and unifying theme: the unlocking of potential through skills, opportunity, and purposeful collaboration.

From the electrifying atmosphere of WorldSkills South Africa 2026 to global stages in India and Germany, this issue showcases how South African talent continues to rise confidently, competitively, and proudly. Our participation in this year's WorldSkills again demonstrated that when industry, government, and institutions of higher education collaborate, we create platforms where excellence thrives. The remarkable achievements of our competitors, who now carry the nation's hopes to Shanghai, affirm that the future of our sectors is in capable hands.

Equally inspiring in this issue, we also share the story of Chef Malebo, whose Top 10 global ranking at the Young Chef Olympiad is a testament to what happens when dedication meets opportunity. His journey, from Limpopo to India, reflects not only personal triumph but also the growing international recognition of South African culinary talent and heritage.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL THROUGH SKILLS: CATHSSETA AT WORLD SKILLS 2026

Energy, excitement, and excellence filled the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban as the WorldSkills South Africa National Competition, Conference and Career Festival 2026 took place from 8 to 12 March 2026. The event brought together South Africa's brightest young talent, industry leaders, training institutions, and SETAs, all united by a shared goal: advancing technical and vocational skills for the future.

In this competition, CATHSSETA supported and funded the Restaurant Services and Cooking category. This is the arena where the heat is on, the knives are sharp, and only the best can withstand the pressure and serve up perfection.

The event commenced with a memorable opening ceremony where our CEO, Mr. Marks Thibela served as the Programme Director. In his charismatic way, he led the event confidently and engaged the attendees. Among the distinguished guests was the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, and Training, Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube should read Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training. The event also brought together numerous delegates from across the African continent to discuss skills development, who were warmly welcomed and recognised by our CEO, Mr Thibela. Delegates recognised were from the following countries: Uganda, Kenya, Cameroon, eSwatini, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Ghana. Other notable participants and international delegates included Mr. J Matteuci (Technical Delegate - WorldSkills Brazil) and Mr. Stefan Praschi (Official Delegate Skills Austria).

As the week progressed, day one saw the start of the WorldSkills South Africa Conference,



Mr Marks Thibela ensured a seamless flow as the Programme Director during the opening ceremony of the WorldSkills SA 2026

where thought leaders, educators, and policymakers gathered to explore how vocational training can be improved. Speaking on the final day of the conference, Deputy Minister Dr Dube-Ncube said, 'We participated in a national conversation regarding South Africa's skills system future. We have scrutinised funding models, challenged apprenticeship systemic barriers, debated quality assurance, and investigated the economic rationale for apprenticeship and artisan development.' She added that they have explored how global benchmarking can enhance South Africa's domestic policy reforms.

At the same time, the Career Festival opened its doors, welcoming thousands of learners eager to explore career opportunities, engage with exhibitors, and envisage their future paths.

The CATHSSETA team of competitors, judges and experts arrived ready to turn up the heat in their respective categories. This is not a space for the faint-hearted. It demands competitors who are willing to step into the kitchen, handle the pressure,



Lusani Nesindande shines as Cooking category winner at the WorldSkills South Africa National Competition, showcasing passion, precision, and culinary excellence.

and give it their all until the final plate is served. It goes beyond just being a competition; it is an opportunity to proudly represent TVET colleges that are delivering top-tier skills development and training. It shines a spotlight on institutions that are raising the standard, proving that the right training and a solid educational foundation are the true secret ingredients for success.

Given the significance of the WorldSkills SA career festival, the CATHSSETA team ensured they arrived with their stand, which served as an information-sharing hub for learners, students, and visitors to discover more about our offerings. The team was easily identifiable throughout the venue, deliberately dressed in branded corporate attire, making it easy for attendees to interact with them. Beyond their operational role, the CATHSSETA team also supported competitors as a source of encouragement and motivation, consistently uplifting participants and reinforcing their sense of purpose while expressing pride in their efforts.

The Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Honourable Dr Dube-Ncube visited the exhibition area, and the highlight was when she visited both the Restaurant Services and Cooking competition areas that fall under the CATHSSETA, where she observed competitors

in action, demonstrating their skills, professionalism, and attention to detail as they served food and drinks. On the second day of the competition, the Honourable Deputy Minister and her entourage had the opportunity to be served by our competitors at the Restaurant Services section. While this may have been nerve-wracking for the competitors, it was made more manageable by her maternal warmth and encouragement as the competitors served the entire team. Among the many guests who were served at the Restaurant Services were our two (2) of CATHSSETA's Board Members, Ms Melanie Roy and Mr Taumang Mathibeng as well as Mr Marks Thibela, CEO and Ms Lebogang Mpye — Executive Manager: Learning Programmes.

The competition floor was always lively. Competitors showcased their best across 27 skills categories, with judges carefully assessing their technical ability, creativity, and performance under pressure. A total of 213 competitors nationwide participated, each showcasing their readiness for the demands of the modern workplace. For CATHSSETA, the competitions reaffirmed its commitment to developing world-class hospitality professionals. Supporting platforms like WorldSkills competitions that are organised by WorldSkills South Africa (WSZA) ensures that young talent is nurtured, industry standards are elevated, and meaningful career pathways are created.

The event finished on a high note with a vibrant closing ceremony, where Dr. Mimmy Gondwe officially concluded the competition. Winners were celebrated for their outstanding achievements, marking the culmination of a week filled with hard work and determination. Our CEO, Mr Thibela, also took to the stage to personally congratulate the winners in both the Cooking and Restaurant Services categories, recognising their excellence and dedication.

In the Cooking category, Ms Lusani Netsidande from Gauteng secured first place, followed by Ms Simphiwe Mchunu from KwaZulu-Natal and Ms Lulama Muhlari from Limpopo in third. In Restaurant Services, Ms Karabelo Seqhoang from Gauteng claimed first place, with Ms Gcina Sokhulu from KwaZulu-Natal in second, and Ms Londeka Ndebele from Free State in third. These winners will represent South Africa at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026. Our winner in Restaurant Services, Ms Seqhoang, could not contain her excitement and said she is looking forward to representing the country and her family at Shanghai in China.



Karabelo Seqhoang sets the standard as Restaurant Services winner at the WorldSkills South Africa National Competition, delivering professionalism and world-class hospitality

"I'm very glad to have been part of the competitions. Even though there were challenges, I learned a lot and remain eager to grow, as hospitality constantly brings new experiences. I gained knowledge and built self-confidence, which I now realise is essential when dealing with guests. It is crucial to be polite, smile, assist guests patiently and treat every guest equally. I look forward to further training to improve on my mistakes and give my best at Shanghai, said Ms Seghoang.

Our mentor and expert in the Restaurant Services category, Mr Lesetja Kgole, from Ekurhuleni West TVET College, was on the floor guiding competitors to perform at their highest level during the competition and to ensure that whoever becomes a winner is fully prepared to represent South Africa with excellence at the international competition.

My role during the competition was that of a Skills Competition Manager (SCM) for Skill 35, Restaurant Services. I am responsible for preparing the competitors to proudly represent South Africa on the international stage.

In the Cooking category, Chef Fatima Stanley from Master Chef Culinary Academy served as the Skills Competition Manager, where she also played a significant role in guiding and ensuring that the competitors were giving their all during the competition. 'My role was to oversee the infrastructure and setup of the cooking area, while also guiding and supporting competitors, judges, and floor managers throughout the process. As the winner is based in Gauteng Province, I will collaborate with fine dining

restaurants in the province to further support and enhance the winner's training', said Chef Fatima. Through her industry connections, she will engage fine dining restaurants in Gauteng to support and enhance the winner's training and preparation for the world stage.

As the curtains fell on a successful event, CATHSSETA celebrated not only the winners but also every participant who demonstrated passion, resilience, and excellence. Through initiatives like WorldSkills South Africa, the future of the country's hospitality sector remains bright, driven by skilled, motivated, and inspired young professionals. The journey now continues onto the global stage at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026, set to take place in September at Shanghai in China, where South Africa's finest will compete among the best in the world.

We wish all the competitors the best of luck and trust in their abilities to bring home the medals. One thing is certain: the South African flag will be represented, and the pride of our land will shine amongst the best of the best!



CATHSSETA leadership united with Chef Fatima in support of skills excellence at the WorldSkills South Africa Competition.



FROM LIMPOPO TO INDIA: CATHSSETA CELEBRATES CHEF MALEBO'S TOP 10 TRIUMPH

Chef Malebo Mohlatlego Meela, the emerging culinary star at the Young Chef Olympiad 2026 Academy.

young chefs from 50 nations gathered and united by a shared pursuit of excellence. In that moment, Malebo was not only representing himself, but every aspiring chef in South Africa.

As the programme moved to Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana state in Southern India, the spirit of cultural exchange deepened. Surrounded by diverse languages, aromas, and traditions, Chef Malebo stood proudly as an ambassador of South African flavour. His preparation of Amadumbe pudding, a heartfelt tribute to local heritage, captivated judges and fellow competitors alike. With every spoonful, he shared a story of home, identity, and the richness of indigenous ingredients which CATHSSETA proudly advocates for.

In a high-stakes test of versatility, competitors had just two hours to demonstrate their technical skills by filleting a whole fish and preparing a plant-based dessert. Chef Malebo approached the challenge with calm precision. His chocolate fondant with coconut, mango, and orange gel, paired with a delicately crafted fish roulade served with sweet potato rösti, saffron and lime sauce, and fennel and grape salad, reflected not only technical mastery but confidence forged through quality training and mentorship.

The final stage of the competition took place in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, where his endurance and skill were tested. Competitors were required to debone a whole chicken and produce four identical plated dishes within three hours. Chef Malebo's professionalism shone through as he demonstrated resilience, control, and unwavering determination.

CATHSSETA proudly celebrates Mr Malebo Mohlatlego Meela, the emerging culinary star from Limpopo Chef Academy, who passionately and purposefully carried the South African flag at the prestigious Young Chef Olympiad 2026 in India. Mr Meela is one of the students who are funded by our SETA to pursue a chef artisan qualification.

For Chef Malebo, this was more than just a competition; it was the realisation of a dream nurtured by dedication, discipline, and the transformative power of skills development. Accompanied by his mentor and lecturer, Chef Raiyen, he travelled nearly 18 hours from Limpopo to Bengaluru in India. Just for noting, Bengaluru is the largest city of the southern Indian state of Karnataka, and this is where a young man from Limpopo was to showcase his culinary skills.

Though exhausted, his fatigue quickly gave way to excitement as he stepped onto a global stage where

This clearly proved that he is the man who can stand the heat in the kitchen.

When the results were announced at the closing ceremony, South Africa had every reason to celebrate. Chef Malebo achieved a top 10 global ranking in the Plate Trophy category, an extraordinary achievement among 50 competing countries. He was also honoured with the Ambassador's Award, recognising not only his culinary talent but also his integrity, humility, and the pride with which he represented his nation.

Talking to Chef Tommie Hurter, the principal of the Limpopo Chefs Academy, he said Chef Malebo's participation in the Young Chef Olympiad 2026 in India represents a proud milestone for Limpopo Chefs Academy, CATHSSETA and South African culinary education. "Competing against chefs from 50 countries, Malebo secured a place in the Top 10 globally and received the Ambassador's Award for his professionalism and representation of South Africa. This achievement reflects the quality of training, mentorship, and discipline developed at Limpopo Chefs Academy, as well as the guidance of Chef Raiyen. For Limpopo Chefs Academy, this success demonstrates that talent nurtured in Limpopo can compete confidently on the world stage, strengthening the school's reputation and inspiring future chefs to pursue excellence in the global culinary industry," he added.

This milestone is profoundly important. It highlights the transformative effect of structured skills development, strong mentorship, and the essential role of Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) - aligned institutions in fostering talent within the hospitality sector. It serves as a powerful reminder of what becomes achievable when opportunity meets preparation.

Talking about his involvement in the competition, Chef Malebo had this to say,

“Participating in the Young Chef Olympiad 2026 was a life-changing experience for me. Competing alongside talented chefs from around the world pushed me to grow both personally and professionally, while proudly representing South Africa, my school, and my family. From sharing cultures and cuisines to cooking under intense pressure, every moment taught me something new. Advancing in the competition and receiving the Ambassador's Award was an honour, but what meant the most was realising how food connects people across countries and cultures. It is a journey I will always be grateful for and one I will cherish for the rest of my life.”



Limpopo taking up space in India at the International Young Chef Olympiad.

CATHSSETA extends heartfelt congratulations to Chef Malebo, Chef Raiyen, and Limpopo Chef Academy on this phenomenal achievement. His journey has inspired the sector and reaffirmed South Africa's place on the global culinary map. Today, we celebrate not just a Top 10 ranking, but heritage, excellence, and the bright future of South African skills development. We proudly crown Chef Malebo as the diamond of the season.



TOURISM ACTION LAB LAUNCHED TO ACCELERATE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

On 23 February 2026, the Department of Tourism officially launched the Tourism Action Lab (TAL) at the Sandton Convention Centre during the Meetings Africa 2026. The unveiling marked an important milestone in the sector's efforts to respond decisively to youth unemployment through structured, scalable and collaborative interventions.

The Tourism Action Lab is part of the Tourism Youth Employment Intervention (TYEI), aligned with the broader Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) led by The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa. This alignment ensures that tourism effectively contributes to addressing the country's pressing youth unemployment challenge while supporting inclusive economic growth.

The launch brought together representatives from national and provincial government, academics, lecturers from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, tourism training providers and private sector stakeholders. Industry bodies such as Federated Hospitality

Association of South Africa (FEDHASA), Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA), Tourism Export Council of South Africa (TESA), Yes4Youth and Harambee were among those represented. This diverse participation enabled robust engagement across policy, education and industry perspectives.

Discussions during the session centered on identifying systemic barriers that restrict young people's access to earning, learning, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities within the tourism sector. Participants examined challenges such as limited digital access, gaps in career guidance and labour market information, misaligned funding mechanisms and administrative constraints that delay implementation.

Speaking during the engagement, Ms Zandile Ntshangase, Regional Manager for Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo emphasised that CATHSSETA's learning programmes are directly aligned with its mandate of driving skills development to close the unemployment gap. She highlighted the

importance of sustained engagement with training providers and industry partners to unlock opportunities for young people. “CATHSSETA operates through a collaborative model in which learners are equipped with relevant skills and competencies, while industry plays a critical role in absorbing them into the workplace. This partnership-driven approach ensures that training interventions are responsive to labour market needs and translate into real employment outcomes,” said Ms Ntshangase.

Several key outcomes emerged from the launch. Barriers to youth earning opportunities were identified, with actions proposed to address them. Existing initiatives within both the public and private sectors that could be expanded were mapped, and new medium - to long-term opportunities were conceptualised to strengthen the project pipeline. Importantly, the Tourism Action Lab was formally established as the coordinating structure through which earning opportunity initiatives will be aligned and advanced.

Although the primary focus of the session was on identifying challenges, solution-oriented themes also emerged. These included investing in digital skills as a key enabler of tourism employment to strengthen career matching systems and labour market platforms.

The session concluded with an invitation for participants to join a dedicated WhatsApp group designed to share tourism-related work opportunities and sustaining collaboration beyond the launch.

The establishment of the Tourism Action Lab signifies a renewed and structured commitment to unlocking job-rich growth in tourism. Through strengthened collaboration between government, educational institutions and industry partners, the sector is positioning itself to develop sustainable employment opportunities for South Africa's youth.



A gathering of passionate stakeholders united to tackle youth unemployment.

STRENGTHENING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DISCRETIONARY GRANT WORKSHOPS

The CATHSSETA's DISCRETIONARY GRANT (DG) promotes skills development across our diverse subsectors by funding initiatives such as learnerships, internships, work-integrated learning, bursaries, skills programmes, and artisan training. Designed to encourage stakeholders to actively build skills, most of the discretionary funding is directed towards Professional, Vocational, Technical and Academic Learning Programmes (PIVOTAL) programmes, ensuring targeted, practical learning opportunities that strengthen both individual careers and the broader sector.

In line with its commitment to stakeholder engagement and the Batho Pele principles, CATHSSETA began the year by hosting a series of Discretionary Grant workshops across all nine provinces from 15 to 23 January 2026. Stakeholders participated in the workshops through a hybrid format, both in-person and online, which provided them with multiple opportunities to engage actively, ask questions, share insights, and clarify compliance and funding requirements.

In line with the collaborative nature of CATHSSETA meetings, the DG workshops also provide a platform for one-on-one sessions with managers and Skills Liaison Officers present to address specific issues related to funding, accreditation, partnerships, etc.

These workshops provided the participants with practical guidance on preparing a strong, and compliant application as well as offered a platform for collaborative discussions. By combining virtual and in-person sessions, the entity reinforced its focus on accessibility, engagement, and capacity building across the sector, ensuring stakeholders are well-equipped to contribute to the National



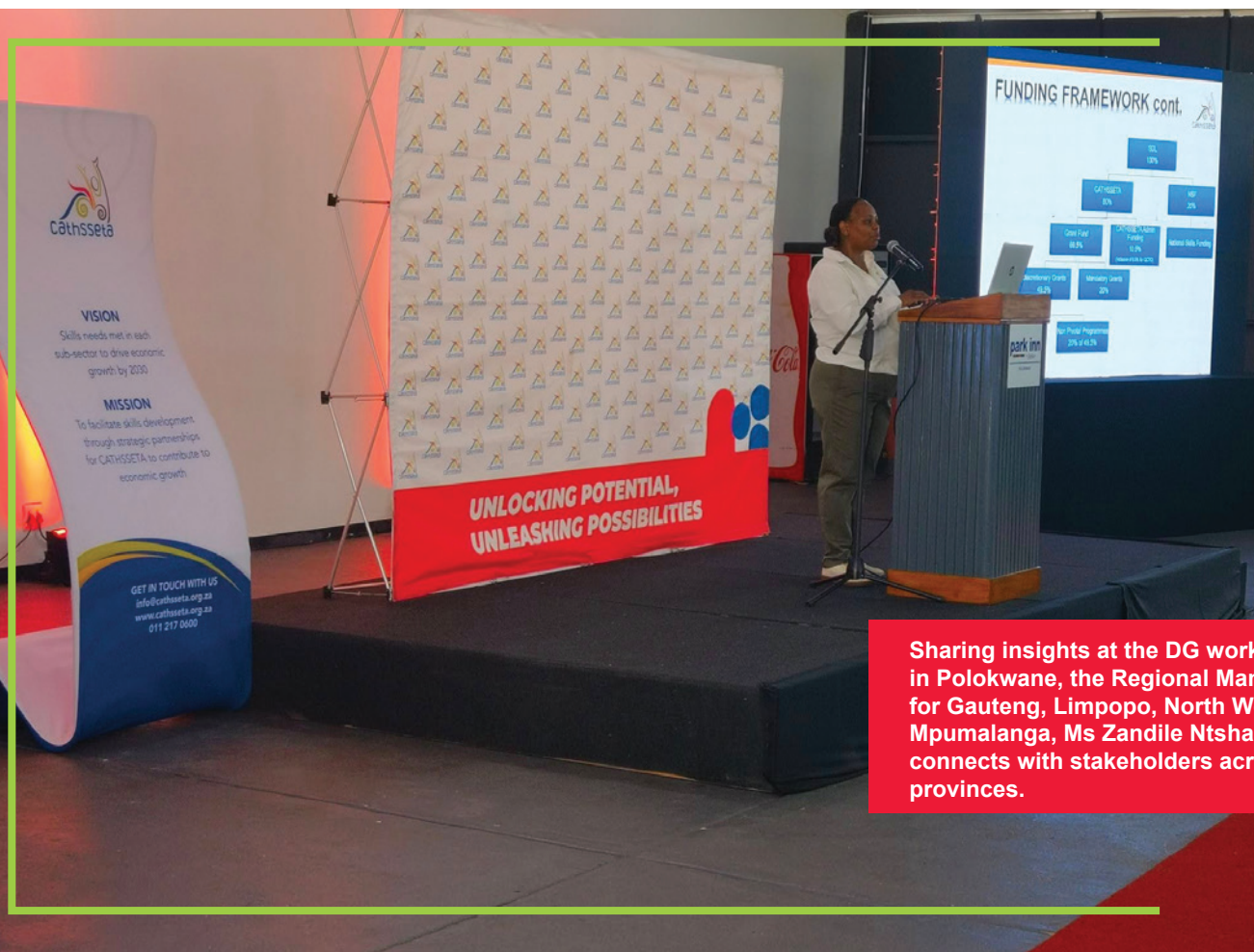
Attentive and focused, the audience captures key steps for the DG funding application.

Skills Development Plan 2030's outcomes. Due to technical issues and logistical challenges experienced during the Limpopo workshop, an additional virtual workshop was subsequently scheduled for 26 January 2026.

The sessions attracted notable participation across provinces, with venues bustling and stakeholders displaying strong interest in the Discretionary Grant process. In KwaZulu-Natal, the workshop held at the Garden Court Marine Parade in South Beach was well attended, reflecting the sector's eagerness to engage directly with the SETA on funding opportunities and compliance



Ms Tebogo Mohulatsi takes stakeholders step by step through the DG application processes.



Our stakeholders consistently turn up, committed to advancing skills development and training.

requirements. The hotel, situated along Durban's famous Golden Mile and capable of hosting large conferences of several hundred delegates, provided an appropriate setting for the lively engagement.

Of course, Gauteng Province recorded the highest number of stakeholders. The Gauteng Province session, held at the Courtyard Hotel Waterfall City, attracted stakeholder participation both in person and virtually. The venue was filled with industry representatives, training providers and employers, while online participation exceeded expectations, with attendance surpassing 150 participants. The high turnout across both platforms demonstrated the sector's strong interest in engaging with CATHSSETA and ensuring that stakeholders remain informed and well prepared for the upcoming Discretionary Grant funding window.

These workshops served as a strategic vehicle for the SETA to reinforce its mandate of stakeholder-driven skills development. By facilitating a forum for high-impact engagement, the organisation underscored its commitment to the core values of transparency, accountability, and service excellence.

UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA PROPELS GRADUATES ONTO THE GLOBAL STAGE AS YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK EXCELLENCE SHINES



From eKasi to the world, our dreams are still valid.

As the global economy evolves, today's workplace demands graduates who are agile, culturally aware and capable of competing beyond national borders. Across South Africa, a compelling story is emerging, one of young, talented and black excellence rising with confidence and claiming space on the international stage. The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) demonstrates that a young institution can deliver world-class education and produce graduates ready to represent the nation with distinction worldwide.

Tourism and hospitality continue to play a pivotal role in driving South Africa's economic growth, stimulating enterprise development and creating employment for young people. Yet many students, particularly those from rural and developing institutions, have historically had limited exposure to global tourism systems and intercultural learning opportunities that strengthen competitiveness. Determined to close this gap, UMP has positioned itself as a forward-looking African university committed to expanding international access and broadening horizons for its students.

In January 2026, the university began a new chapter by piloting its international student mobility programme through participation in the Hessian International Winter University (IWU), hosted by Fulda University of Applied Sciences in Germany. The three-week academic experience gathered students from Australia, Asia and Europe, alongside four UMP Bachelor of Arts students Ms Phumulani Zungu, Ms Tshegofatso Charmain Chidi, Mr Thabang Molimi and Ms Tonie Tshiane, who proudly carried South Africa's flag abroad. UMP's participation marked a historic milestone, as it became the first African university to join the IWU programme.

The IWU combined formal academic instruction with intercultural engagement, exposing students to global social, cultural and linguistic discourses while immersing them in the German higher education environment and the city of Fulda. Beyond the classroom, the programme promoted global citizenship, adaptability and cross-cultural understanding, qualities that are increasingly vital in the modern labour market.

Through strategic international partnerships, UMP continues to strengthen its capacity to generate knowledge that addresses local realities while engaging with global challenges. It is steadily shaping a university model that is proudly African yet globally connected.

Mr Molimi from Numbi village near Hazyview in Mpumalanga Province, challenges the notion of who can access international excellence. He observed that when preparation meets determination, excellence becomes achievable regardless of background. His journey reflects a broader transformation within South Africa's higher education sector, where young people from previously marginalised communities are entering global spaces with confidence and purpose.

'This experience directly challenges the idea that only students from large or historically established institutions can achieve global excellence. Opportunity, when combined with preparation and determination, can produce world-class outcomes regardless of origin,' said Molimi, who is based at the Mbombela campus.

Similarly, Ms Chidi from Mabopane in Gauteng Province, described the opportunity as deeply affirming. Raised in a family that considers education a catalyst for change, she saw her participation as both a personal milestone and a moment of collective pride. Engaging with peers from around the world reinforced her appreciation of how South Africa is perceived internationally. In representing her university and country, she exemplified black excellence and the promise of a generation determined to excel.

'I come from a humble family that has always valued education as a tool for change, even when resources were limited. This opportunity meant a great deal to them. It was a moment of pride and hope for my family. My most memorable experience is how other countries value South Africa and their interest in learning about and knowing about our country,' she said.

The initiative was further strengthened by CATHSSETA's contribution, underscoring the importance of collaboration in advancing skills development and training. As an institution committed to tackling youth unemployment, CATHSSETA continues to support programmes that enhance employability and align education with industry requirements. By providing stipends and winter clothing, the authority ensured that students could participate meaningfully in the international experience, reaffirming its role in creating practical pathways for youth advancement.

Additional support was provided through a partnership with Travel with Confidence (TWC), led by a Fulda University alumna whose involvement facilitated access to the IWU and provided financial backing for the pilot cohort. Anchored in a three-year Memorandum of Understanding between UMP and TWC, this collaboration lays the groundwork for

expanding student mobility and scaling up global learning opportunities in the future.

Experiences such as the IWU significantly enhance students' academic and professional profiles, particularly for first-generation university attendees preparing to enter a competitive job market. Participants return with strengthened intercultural competence, broader networks and renewed confidence to contribute to innovation and development within their communities.

From Mpumalanga to Germany and beyond, these students represent more than just academic achievement. They embody a generation that is unapologetically ambitious, young, gifted and Black, determined to rewrite narratives, claim international platforms and contribute meaningfully to South Africa's progress. Through strategic partnerships, skills development initiatives and a shared commitment to excellence, UMP and CATHSSETA continue to ensure that the province and the nation are proudly represented on the global stage.



A historic moment as UMP students become the first from an African university to participate in the IWU programme in Germany.

MEET DR TEBOGO UMANAH

EXECUTIVE MANAGER: RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Dr. Tebogo Umanah serves as the Executive Manager for Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RME), where she leads organisational efforts to strengthen evidencebased decisionmaking and enhance organisational performance. She oversees the development of credible research, effective monitoring and evaluation systems, and robust processes that promote accountability and continuous improvement. Known for her analytical excellence and ethical leadership, she guides multidisciplinary teams in producing insights that inform strategic planning. Beyond her professional role, Dr. Umanah is a devoted wife, mother and pastor, reflecting her deep commitment to service, community and purposeful leadership.

Professional Life

As the Executive Manager for RME, what are the key functions of your department within the organisation?

It is important to note that the RME department is made up of the Research and Planning unit and the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation unit. Overall, the department is responsible for coordinating strategic planning and ultimately producing the Strategic Plan and the Annual Performance Plan. The department also identifies the sector skills needs through research, culminating in the development of the Sector Skills Plan, which informs the Strategic Plan. The department's evaluation role assists in determining the outcomes and impact of various learning interventions. By analysing key reports and outcomes, we provide leadership with evidence on performance, gaps, and resource priorities. It is partly the findings of research and evaluation studies that enable the Board Chairperson or other Board members to craft their speeches accordingly. We are also responsible for quarterly performance reporting on the organisation's Annual Performance Plan, as well as for annual reporting through the Annual Report. In summary, our work ensures that every decision is supported by evidence and every programme is aligned to strategic priorities.



Dr Tebogo Umanah delivering closing remarks during the CATHSSETA-McDonald's South Africa graduation ceremony in Cape Town.

What leadership approach do you use to guide and motivate your team to deliver impactful results?

I believe in transformational leadership, which I employ to guide and inspire my team by establishing a clear vision, aligning them around a shared purpose, and motivating them to go beyond mere compliance to achieve meaningful and impactful results. I ensure that my team understands why our work matters and how research, monitoring and evaluation contribute to accountability and evidencebased decision-making. When people see the bigger picture, they become more engaged and committed. I am also deliberate about starting my day in prayer, trusting that every activity is guided by the Lord.

What key achievements or milestones has your department reached under your leadership?

Under my leadership, CATHSSETA hosted its inaugural Sector Skills Conference, the first event of its kind. The purpose of the conference was to launch high-impact projects and strengthen sector collaboration. The event brought together industry leaders, government departments, higher education institutions, and sector stakeholders. The conference received extensive media coverage. We managed to secure speakers from the SETAs diverse sectors, including the well-renowned music legend, Selaelo Selota. Strategic partners with potential labour absorption, such as Harambee and the Jobs Fund, were also engaged. The conference was also graced by subject matter experts on Conservation, Hospitality and Tourism and Travel Services from North-West University, Potchefstroom.

In terms of our studies, we have seen the impact as follows:

- Recommendations from the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) strategy led to the development of an integrated learner portal on the SETA website, enabling easier access to information and learner registration for prospective opportunities.
- The Mandatory Grant (MG) Study prompted updates to the MG policy, uploaded manuals, employer communications, extended support hours during applications, direct staff access for applicants and technical assistance.
- Through the Mid-term Review study recommendation, CATHSSETA has implemented key recommendations, including the development of the organisation's Operating Model, conducting mini SSP research across all sub-sectors and enhancing the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework with a focus on various learning interventions.

Why is Monitoring and Evaluation essential?

M&E helps identify problematic areas in skills programmes and suggests solutions to address them. It also measures the impact of the programmes, to determine the extent of labour absorption, entrepreneurship development and sustainability. Programmes are improved through monitoring and evaluation.

Personal Life

In addition to your professional role, you are also a wife, mother and pastor. How do these roles influence your leadership style and personal outlook?

One naturally becomes a nurturer without realising it and often finds oneself taking on a counselling role in many spaces. These roles ground me, broaden my perspective and enable me to lead with empathy, purpose and balance. Above all, it is the Word of God that anchors my overall responsibilities.

When you are not working or serving in ministry, how do you usually spend your spare time?

I spend most of my free time with my family, being present, reconnecting and enjoying simple moments together. I also make time to read, reflect and pray. Occasionally, I enjoy light activities like taking walks or listening to music to recharge and maintain balance. Additionally, I find shopping to be a relaxing recreational activity that allows me to unwind and recharge outside my formal responsibilities.

Do you enjoy travelling? If so, what are some of your favourite destinations or places you would still love to visit?

Locally, one of my favourite destinations is Cape Town. I appreciate its natural beauty, cultural diversity and the sense of calm it offers. Internationally, I have enjoyed travelling to various cities in the United States, which has broadened my global outlook and exposed me to different ways of life. Looking ahead, I would still love to visit Zanzibar, Eswatini (Swaziland), Mozambique and Seychelles, as these destinations appeal to my love for nature, culture and peaceful environments.

What advice would you give to young professionals, especially women, who aspire to be leadership roles while balancing family and purpose?

It is important to prioritise quality time with your family, because they remain your strongest support network. The individuals who consistently demonstrate genuine love, patience and unwavering support are those within your family circle. Nurturing those relationships provides emotional grounding, stability and perspective, which are essential for maintaining balance and effectiveness as a leader.

If you could advise your younger self at the start of your career, what would it be?

Document every lesson you learn at each stage of your career and stay receptive to others' perspectives. Successful careers are built not only on individual effort, but also on the strength of collaboration and teamwork.



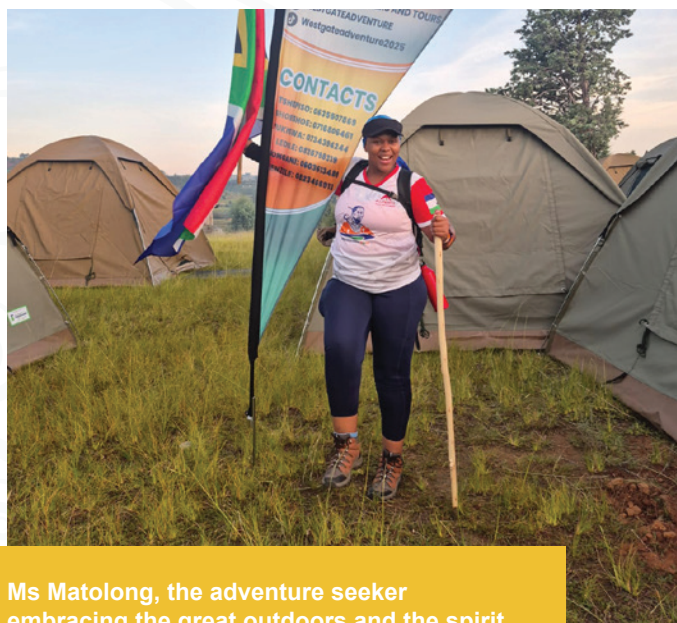
In her element, Dr Umanah spreading the word of God.



Ms Matolong enjoying herself in Lesotho.

While cold weekends are often reserved for indoor activities, some individuals remain undeterred by the weather. One such person is Ms Keabetswe Matolong, a Skills Liaison Officer in CATHSSETA's Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West regional offices. Always eager for adventure and committed to maintaining physical and mental fitness, Ms Matolong recently participated in the historic Moshoeshoe Walk, a three-day hiking trail in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The trail begins in Menkhoaneng, Butha-Buthe and ends at the Thaba Bosiu Cultural Village, retracing the journey of King Moshoeshoe I, who led the Basotho clan to Thaba Bosiu where he later settled. The walk attracts participants from around the world, including hikers from Malawi, Botswana, the United States, China and Holland, alongside Basotho locals.



Ms Matolong, the adventure seeker embracing the great outdoors and the spirit of exploration.

WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF KING MOSHOESHOE I



Walking strong alongside Radio 2000 sports presenter, Mr Lelo Mzaca.

“I joined the walk to reconnect with my friends and to walk in the land of my forefathers. It was a deeply spiritual experience, almost like a revival, grounding me, renewing my spirit and strengthening my connection to my heritage,” said Ms Matolong.

Ms Matolong's participation underscores the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle while celebrating culture and heritage. As an organisation supporting sectors such as Sport, Recreation and Fitness, CATHSSETA encourages staff to engage in physical activities that promote wellness, resilience and community involvement. Events such as the Moshoeshoe Walk not only highlight the value of physical fitness but also demonstrate how cultural tourism and recreation can unite people.

Head Office

011 217 0600

info@cathsseta.org.za

270 George Road,
Noordwyk, Midrand, 1687
P.O Box 1329
Rivonia
2128

<https://www.facebook.com/cathsseta>

@cathsseta1

Cathsseta

Regional Offices

Gauteng, North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga

270 George Road,
Noordwyk
Midrand, 1687

gp.nw@cathsseta.org.za

KwaZulu-Natal and Free State

262 Daintree Avenue
eThekweni TVET College
Asherville, Durban. 4091

kzn@cathsseta.org.za

Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape

Northlink College, Tygerberg Campus
Rothschild Boulevard
Panaroma, 7506

wc@cathsseta.org.za



**higher education
& training**

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

