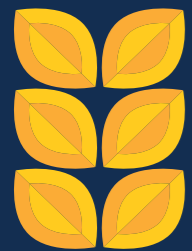


THE HLUMA INDABA REPORT

A week of lunch-time workshops and critical conversations responding to the question: "How can Mandela University develop its own unique approach to student hunger?"



OCT
2023

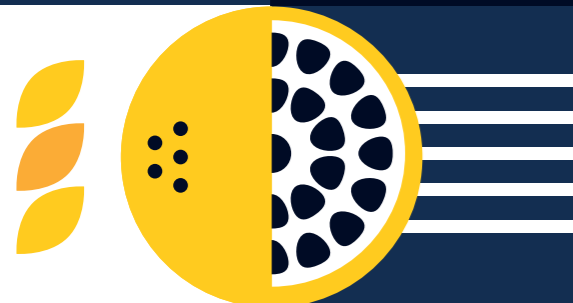


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PREAMBLE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT IS, INTER ALIA, TO:



CAPTURE THE RICH DISCUSSIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS THAT CAME THROUGH THE INDABA



SERVE AS A TOOL AND MOTIVATION TO GARNER FURTHER SUPPORT AROUND STUDENT HUNGER



INFORM THE SPENDING OF SEED FUNDING THAT THE STUDENT HUNGER SUBGROUP RECEIVED

BACKGROUND

Student hunger is a serious threat to student success at institutions of higher education in South Africa. Because the concept is difficult to define and measure, an exact percentage of the number of students that are directly affected by student hunger, has not yet been determined. Yet numerous research studies that have been conducted in South Africa over the past 10 years have confirmed that at least 30% of South African students struggle with food insecurity.

At Mandela University, 68% of 31 747 students received financial aid in 2022. This means that about 10 000 students are unfunded. While there is not a direct correlation between funding source and student hunger, it can be deduced that unfunded students are at a great risk of student hunger when their families are unable to provide financial support to their student children due to poor socio- economic circumstances. Additionally funded students could also be at risk. This is due to random administrative errors, delayed fund transfers or receiving funding that covers tuition, but not means for daily living.

Mandela University's official response to student hunger is the distribution of food parcels to unfunded students via Campus Health clinics at the institution. In 2022, 1 100 parcels per month were handed out to students who request assistance via an online booking system. This short-term strategy provides immediate relief to students, but is not meeting the current demand. According to the University's Director of Campus Health, more students are requesting assistance than the available food parcels. Moreover, according to students, the food parcels are not sufficiently nutritious and don't last for a full month.

Other approaches that are more long-term in nature and sustainable, are also needed to prevent the overreliance on immediate relief and donations.

In 2022, the [Mandela University Food Systems programme](#) formed a student hunger subgroup to respond to the above crisis. This subgroup is positioned in the Social Development Professions Department at the University, and is currently comprised of two staff members and two students. The subgroup is looking at designing and implementing approaches to address student hunger that are student-centred, sustainable and humanizing. This indaba is one way in which we seek to achieve this.



THE PURPOSE

In light of World Food Day¹ on 16 October 2023, the Mandela University Food Systems programme's Student Hunger Subgroup hosted an indaba. The purpose of the indaba was two-fold as it responded to the prompt, "how can Mandela University develop its own unique approach to student hunger?" by:

1. Highlighting and engaging with work that has been done around student hunger
2. Critically exploring and engaging with ideas of what can be done

THE NAME

In 2022, the Mandela University Food Systems programme, as part of its Engaged Teaching and Learning efforts, had a pilot collaboration with the Department of Media and Communications, with three Honours students enrolled for an elective module: Critical Approaches to Design. One of the fundamental questions this module poses to students is 'Do designers and visual communicators need to become agents of social change? If so, how do they do this?'

In response to this, we asked students to envision – and develop a campaign for – what an indaba² focused on food and students could look like. 'The Hluma Indaba' is what one of the students – Mr Manfred Kriger – envisioned.

'Hluma' is a Xhosa word loosely translated in this context to mean 'grow' or 'prosper'. Mr Kriger's campaign adopted the slogan 'growth meets new horizons', and his campaign's concept focused on changing the way that people – especially young people – engage with issues around food – and that is exactly what this indaba will aim to do.

THE SPACE

The indaba was hosted at the Charlotte Maxeke Residence lounge on North Campus. The residence is named after Charlotte Maxeke (maiden name Manye) who was a South African woman who broke societal barriers throughout her life. While the lounge was originally selected because of other traditional venues being fully booked, the space proved to be productive for a number of reasons: the lounge style set-up helped facilitate more conversational-style discussions; it highlighted the importance of connecting with and including residence managers and house comm leaders in conversations around student hunger more closely moving forward – and, through the generosity of the residence's manager, Mrs Leonie Beckett, allowed us to begin making such connections.

Read more about the pilot collaboration from page 15 *here*.

⁰¹ The theme of water for World Food Day 2023, "Water is life, water is food." View more here: <https://www.fao.org/world-food-day/en>

⁰² A South African term for a discussion or conference.

DAY ONE

INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS AROUND WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

| Monday, 16 October 2023 1-2pm



The first session was opened by DVC Dr Muki Moeng and begun a critical conversation around what has been happening in response to student hunger at Mandela University.

Dr Moeng raised some important questions to participants, including: 'how do we sustain ourselves?', 'how can you as individuals or a collective make a change', reminding participants that 'to be human is to care'.

An overview of the Student Hunger subgroup's development since December 2021 to now was shared, as well as an overview of existing initiatives and interventions on campus.

This included:



WORKSHOPS



FOOD CUPBOARDS



FOOD GARDENS



COFFEE BARS



FOOD PARCELS



Image: DVC Learning and Teaching Dr Muki Moeng at Day One of the Hluma Indaba.

An overview of recommendations for what could be done, based on discussions in a workshop³ hosted by the student hunger subgroup in July 2023, was shared:



Financial literacy



Having a separate department



Changing the catering model



Increasing access to cooking appliances



Considering human dignity in all solutions



Improving the coordination of food parcels



Enhancing support systems



Bulk buying



Defining student hunger



Reviving campus gardens



Developing a repository of research



Facilitating dialogues with students⁴



Reconsidering how we deal with food waste



Hosting fundraising initiatives



Institutionalizing student hunger



⁰³ The Student Hunger subgroup hosted a workshop on 21 July 2023. The purpose was to bring together everyone who is involved – or who would like to be involved – in thinking through solutions to student hunger at Nelson Mandela University. Building on past engagements, the aim was to develop a clear(er) idea of what we can put our energy and resources into in addressing student hunger as an institution moving forward.

⁰⁴ This indaba was a response to and demonstration of this recommendation, and the subgroup will be giving thoughtful consideration to how these dialogues can continue.

Participants were randomly divided into four small groups to discuss four questions. The table below summarises their responses.

1 What current initiatives are you aware of?

- Food parcels
- Law Faculty's Ubuntu pop-up coffee-bar
- Education Faculty's food parcels + pantry and fundraisers
- SRC cooking meals for students during exams
- Residence's pantries
- Help-a-Sister initiative
- Department of Agricultural Sciences trying to get two gardens going on North Campus (already raised the garden beds + water pipes)

2 How are those working for you?

- Not working
- Food parcels are limited, and the booking system is not functional
- Post-graduate students are not eligible for food parcels
- Food parcel contents are insufficient
- Funding received is insufficient
- An initiative like the pop-up coffee bar is only based at one campus

3 What are the gaps in the current approach?

- Online system classifies unfunded students as funded, preventing them from receiving food parcels
- Booking system no longer works
- NSFAS were students affected by the change in service providers
- Students being defunded in the middle of the year
- Some students don't request food parcels, but still get (inconsistent)
- Delays in allowances
- Not enough collaboration + unity between departments
- Unfunded students that join university late, receive nothing at all/are lost in the system
- Sometimes students who know people at the clinic have been able to cut the line
- Stigma around food parcels
- Cafeteria food is expensive
- Living spaces aren't built to facilitate living together + sharing e.g. sugar and milk (the value of ubuntu)

4 What ideas do you have?

- Cafeteria's serving food (hot meals)
- Enhancing entrepreneurship
- Need a new system
- Improved communication around existing solutions e.g. housing resources around student hunger on the student portal (it gets missed on MEMO)
- Create a space where students can disclose food problems
- Work closely with student representatives and residence managers to identify students in need
- Run-4-Food fundraisers
- Unfunded students should receive priority (criteria for parcels must be rethought)
- Residences to have their own pantries
- Create more awareness
- Food gardens: need seeds + soil testing to be done (consider involving InnoVenton)
- Could departments contribute a percentage of their budgets to the issue of student hunger?
- Food parcels should have more diverse contents
- Departments could develop personalized lists re: students in need of food parcels, and then provide that to campus health, to cover those who are otherwise 'lost' in the system due to administrative issues.
- Education is needed: how can students manage the funds they receive?
- Consider rotating the pop-up coffee-bar amongst different campuses

DAY TWO

MINDSETS RELATED TO STUDENT HUNGER PART 1

| Tuesday, 17 October 2023 1-2pm



Natalie Mansvelt (Lecturer: Social Development Professions), Nomthandazo Pukwana (Post-graduate student: Social Development Professions) and Zinzi Nqakula (Recent graduate: Social Development Professions) provided a short introduction to the idea of mindsets and student hunger, followed by a conversation around the question: How do we think mindsets contribute to student hunger?

This question prompted a lively peer-to-peer discussion, which was valuable in that it allowed students to engage and debate on a topic that is often unspoken about, while allowing them to critically reflect on their own mindsets.

Feedback from participants included:

Trying to match what I saw being bought at home (without the same budget) has been a challenge.

Meal prepping and following a 'timetable' based on experiences in boarding school, has been helpful.

Peer pressure is something to consider.

No support system such as e.g. parents or a partner, is a challenge.

Managing expectations and appearances is something to consider too.

The topic of a 'digital social class' was raised, in relation to the lives being portrayed on social media, and the pressure to match such lives.

Sending NSFAS money back home was also raised as a challenge.

Students' different understandings of needs vs wants, was also raised.

Saving 10 percent of NSFAS throughout the year to cover December - January (months not covered by NSFAS) was suggested.

This was followed by a participant problematizing the concept of saving, when receiving an amount that cannot even cover basic expenses.

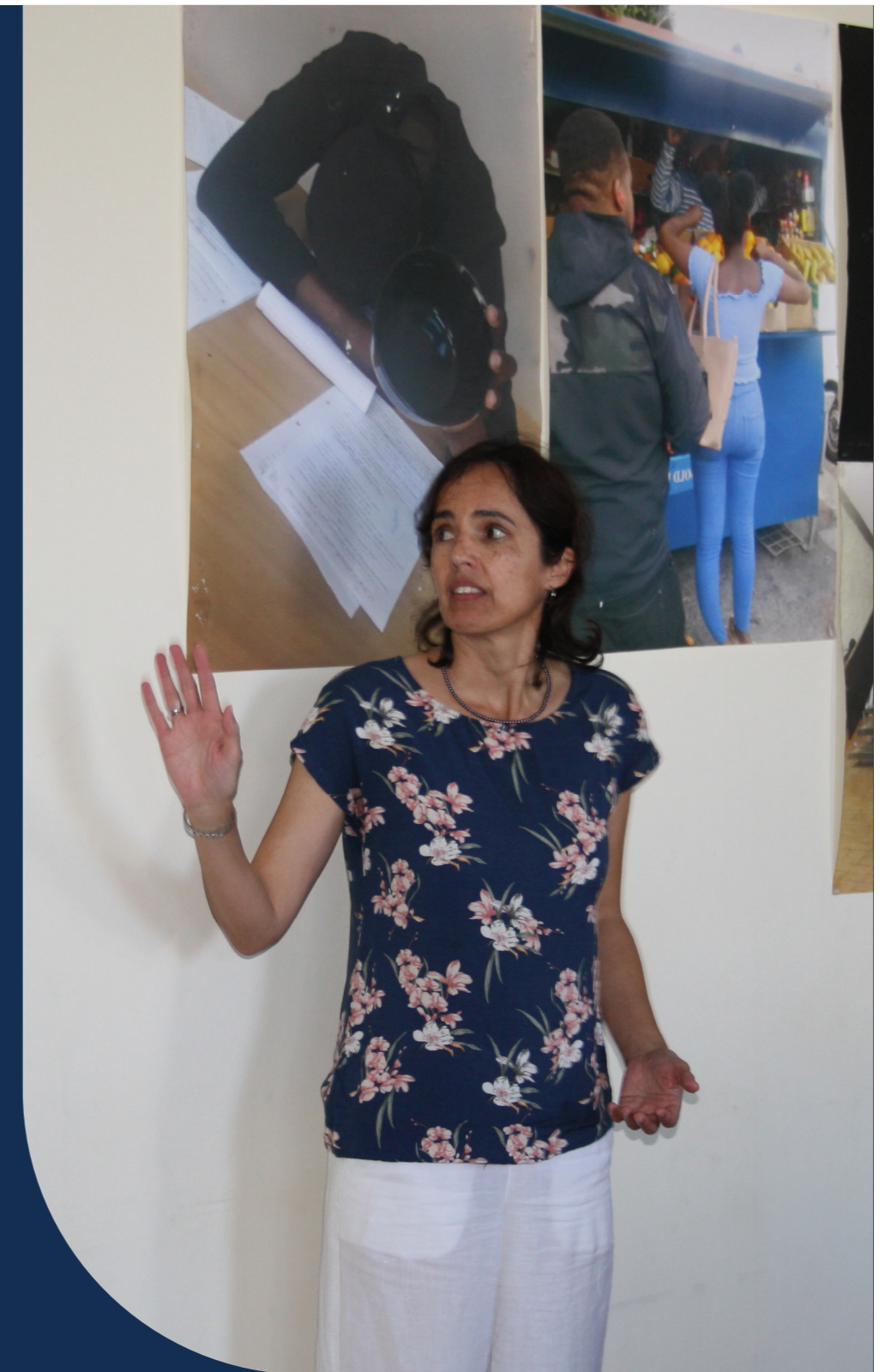


Image: Dr Natalie Mansvelt sharing at Day Two of the Hluma Indaba.

PILOT PROJECT:

FINANCIAL LITERACY TOOL

Four third-year social work students were placed with the Student Hunger Subgroup for 10-weeks as part of their module practical. They were tasked to develop a solution in response to the suggestion that financial literacy is something that need to be addressed when it comes to student hunger. The students conceptualized a financial literacy tool, and shared it with participants, inviting their input.

Feedback from participants included:

- 1 Supporting the idea of incorporating it into the Orientation programme for first-years.
- 2 A hard copy (printed version) is not ideal.
- 3 Consider a podcast format (using social media platforms already out there) - podcasts could be more accessible than e.g. events.
- 4 Consider using an app format (collaborating with GD students or CCT students) - or, using the existing Mandela University app
- 5 How-to vlogs e.g. 'groceries for R1000' - working with University influencers - is another option that could reach students better.
- 6 'Food is temporary but drip is forever ⁵' - the tool should address this notion.

⁰⁵ This was a recurring phrase throughout the indaba, and one that needs to be further investigated.

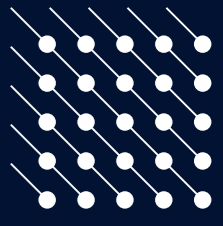
Research of Dr Mansvelt's underpinning the conversation include:

- Read 'STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF STUDENT HUNGER' [here](#).
- Read 'Co-generating a people-centred approach to addressing student hunger at a South African university' [here](#).

DAY THREE

MINDSETS RELATED TO STUDENT HUNGER PART 2

| Wednesday, 18 October 2023 1-2pm



Based on the previous day's discussion, Day Three saw the following question being explored: *How can we reframe mindsets that contribute to student hunger?*

A conversation was also started around the issue of stigma – what it means in this context, and how it relates to mindsets around student hunger.

Feedback from participants included:

- That there is a stigma attached to being poor.
- That students view food parcels as hand-outs.
- That standing in a queue for the food parcels, adds to the stigma.
- Questions were raised around how students can reach out to their roommates to make it okay to share? Responses included having a good relationship with your roommate.
- In residences, students don't live together, they live amongst one another. This means we don't get to know who is struggling.
- Post-COVID-19, there is not a culture of togetherness on campus, and the university does not advocate for togetherness.
- First-year orientation could help advance sisterhood.
- There is not much happening at the Kraal anymore; this is also a potential space to facilitate togetherness ⁶.
- Post-COVID-19, student hunger is much worse. The institution is putting a food forward, but not their best foot.
- At South Campus, every day is a fashion show – this goes back to the question around hunger of the mind and mindsets.
- Some students said, 'when you look good, you feed good.'
- Others said students should 'stop living a life you can't afford', 'don't live an Instagram life', and 'know where you come from'.
- Poverty is undignified. Some students said 'it is not nice that people look down on you', 'it affects your mental health' and 'people don't respect poor people'.

⁰⁶ This was a recurring theme throughout the indaba, and one that needs to be further investigated.

Image: Student Xoliswa Senye, participating at Day Three.



PILOT PROJECT:

AN ALTERNATIVE TO FOOD PARCEL BAGS

The Mandela University Food Systems programme has been exploring engaged teaching and learning with a module in the media and communications department, and this year saw Media Design Honours students designing carry bags as a possible alternative to the current bags used for food parcels, as part of a response towards the problem of student hunger. Ms Felicia Mapaila shared their idea of the bag, that is in the process of being designed in collaboration with the Association for People with Disabilities (APD), and participants shared their thoughts, including:



It was well-received + students said it is a good idea.



Consider having a men's version (the response was that the bag was designed to be suitable for both men and women).



Images: Ms Felicia Mapaila sharing about the bag.

DAY FOUR

CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY: RECONNOITERING THE VALUE OF CAMPUS GARDENS AT THE NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

| Thursday, 18 October 2023 1-2pm



Day Four saw Dr Qinisani Qwabe, a lecturer from the Department of Agricultural Sciences, sharing on the topic of campus sustainability.

About the talk⁷:

The Nelson Mandela University has positioned itself as a green campus that embraces sustainability and environmental stewardship. Coming from an agricultural background, the focus of this talk will be grounded on these two concepts 'environmental stewardship and sustainability' through inculcating the idea of contributing to the green economy on campus through agriculture. The overarching aim of this is to create a community of professionals that can contribute to a sustainable food system at an individual and community level, while embracing environmentally friendly practices that encourage a harmonious relationship between man and the environment.

Dr Qwabe shared on the importance of gardens on our urban campuses, celebrating the fact that universities are beginning to realise the importance of self-sustenance through agriculture. He highlighted the importance of campus gardens beyond food production, looking at increased biodiversity, preserving native ecosystems and, in this particular context, creating communities that live up to the concept of sustainability.

An example was that of the garden at Charlotte Maxeke residence, that at a time supplemented 150 student food parcels distributed by the clinic. Each Friday the fresh produce was harvested, including spinach, spring onions and cherry tomatoes. While this stopped when Covid-19 hit, it points to the potential of campus gardens to create micro-scale food systems that address student food insecurity.

Dr Qwabe argued that we can be doing a lot more when it comes to gardens on campus. Campus gardens could offer spaces for experimental education, increased food systems literacy – above and beyond just agricultural students – as well as offering an alternative space for students to enjoy, which in the conversation around mental health, is well worth exploring.

Dr Qwabe challenged the university to increase the number of gardens all over campus, and lamented that in the past, such projects have been run by individuals or individual departments, hindering the potential for collaboration and transdisciplinary support.

Here, he highlighted the critical role the food systems programme has to play in facilitating such collaboration, which would, inter alia, increase interdisciplinary research and collaboration among students, academics, and non-academics.

Dr Qwabe raised a criticism against the University's current agricultural society, and argued that instead of only including agricultural students, it should be renamed to e.g. a food systems society, under the food systems programme, and allow it to be student and community led.

⁰⁷ Dr Qwabe's session took more of a lecture-style approach, which is why this section contains more information.

Dr Qwabe also emphasised the need to have indigenous species part of our food systems on campus. He highlighted some of the benefits of growing native plant species, including the following:



Using native species has the benefit of reducing the number of resources required to maintain a healthy plant bed.



They are adapted to living here. The key factor that makes an indigenous plant bed more self-sustained is the simple fact that the plants are native to our soils and can tolerate local stresses.



They require fewer resources. Native plants need much less water, fertilizer and attention to survive, as they are used to the unique Albertan environment. These reductions mean less time and money must be spent on maintenance, and the landscaped area is more sustainable.



They are more resilient to pests.



They require less maintenance.



Image: Dr Qwabe sharing at Day Four of the Hluma Indaba.

In concluding, Dr Qwabe highlighted the benefits of having on-campus gardens:



Creates a sense of social responsibility by supporting the use of a local food system and understanding where our food comes from and how it can affect the surrounding world.



Creates a space for learning and research of sustainable food systems and sustainability as a whole.



Reduces the use of carbon emissions.



Increases the health and wellness of students, faculty, and staff.



Beautifies the campus and improves land development by increasing



Soil health, pollinator species, etc.

“If every corner of our campus had a garden, our campus would be a living classroom.”

The session ended with questions from the participants, including:

- Questions around the tension between what is taught (particularly to Agricultural Sciences students) in the curriculum, versus what is actually sustainable and needed to transform food systems.

DAY FIVE

REFLECTIONS + WAY FORWARD

| Friday, 20 October 2023 1-2pm



The final day was set aside for reflections from the week's sessions and co-constructing a way forward in response to the indaba's main question: *how can Mandela University develop its own unique approach to student hunger?*

Participants were asked to respond to the following four questions:

- 1 What stood out for you about this week's sessions?
- 2 What should be prioritised going forward?
- 3 What could Mandela University's unique response to student hunger look like?
- 4 What next? How do we get more conversations going?
Who would like to get involved in any of the identified priorities?



Image: Students participating in the final reflective exercise of the indaba.

Once they'd written their responses on sticky notes, participants were asked to stick them up by each question, and were randomly divided into four groups; one group per question. The groups were tasked to arrange the responses within their respective questions to identify similarities or key themes. Each group then shared a summary of the responses they'd organized.

Question	Main Themes
<p><i>What stood out for you about this week's sessions?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food gardens: benefits + that agricultural students should be part of the conversation 2. University not doing enough 3. Valuable conversations: diverse views + students' views (the importance of hearing their voices) + ideas about how to address the issue 4. Mindsets of students: how it leads to hunger + appearances being more NB than food (peer pressure) + stigma and food parcels + knowing your background + associating with people on same level as self 5. University creating a platform for students' conversations to continue
<p><i>What should be prioritised going forward?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial education 2. Ways to prevent hunger of the mind 3. Increasing food relief: effective book system + criteria to determine who (most) needs relief + prioritizing unfunded students 4. Campus gardens 5. Action + continuing the conversations

Question	Main Themes
<p><i>What could Mandela University's unique response to student hunger look like?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ubuntu: a caring approach 2. Including students: in decision-making + in food gardens 3. Basing it on students' definition of student hunger - What is hunger? What do students want? 4. Food parcels: improving the contents' quality and quantity + improving the distribution system 5. More initiatives: catering for unfunded students; a Mandela Market + Feeding Scheme
<p><i>What next? How do we get more conversations going? Who would like to get involved in any of the identified priorities?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking action on what has been said 2. Surveys: determining students' views + solutions 3. More conversations: regular events + public lectures + at the gardens whilst planting + across campuses 4. Social media: to communicate + engage with students + increase awareness

Image: Students sharing their reflections.





CONCLUSION

A week of such rich, engaging, critical conversations, begs the question 'what now?'. While Friday's session sought to develop somewhat of a response to that question, it is worth pausing on that question as we conclude this report.

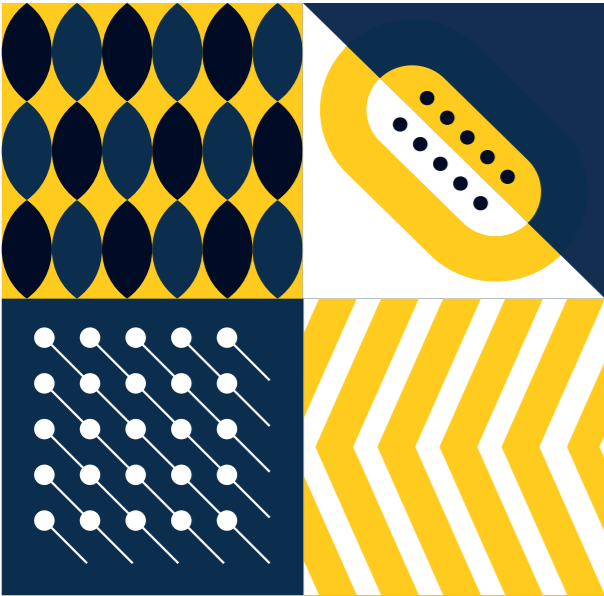
We have some seed funding, with the hope that this report will serve as a demonstration for why we desperately need more.

A number of ideas emerged from the week, including:

- 1 Developing this report as an output to advocate for further conversations and future funding.
- 2 Developing a guideline document encouraging – and equipping – other departments to consider alternative catering options – such as supporting student-run businesses, as this indaba did – when hosting events.
- 3 Collaborating with the Orientation team to pilot a financial literacy tool, based on the work of third-year Social Development Professions students as presented on Day Two.
- 4 Collaborating with the Orientation team to host workshops with first-year students.
- 5 Hold a meeting with all residence managers to determine how we can work more closely with them moving forward.
- 6 Launching a function on our website where anyone can share 'big ideas' they have around student hunger, that they otherwise can't share elsewhere.
- 7 Developing an outline for how we intend to continue the conversation next year – if it will take the form of an indaba, or another (online format).
- 8 Piloting a podcast.
- 9 From Day Four, a suggestion was made to have a survey on students' perceptions around campus gardens
- 10 A suggestion for a pantry – where students in need can take what they need, and students who can afford to by products, can do so – was put forward. This could be explored with the procurement department at the University.

Image: Mr Pushetji Leshilo, Dr Natalie Mansvelt, Ms Nomthandazo Pukwana and Ms Amy De Raedt who formed the Student Hunger Subgroup in 2023.





THANK YOU

FOR VIEWING THE HLUMA INDABA REPORT.

For more information, or to get involved in what we are doing in 2024,
please contact foodsystems@mandela.ac.za

