SHEFS-SA August-September Bulletin 2026

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Remembering Dr Krishna “Denver” Naidoo



1 - May his legacy live on through the work he helped advance.

With heavy hearts, we remember **Dr Krishna “Denver” Naidoo**, a valued member of the SHEFS-SA Community of Practice, who passed away unexpectedly on **2 August 2026**.

A Lecturer and Researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Naidoo dedicated his career to advancing work in **food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, climate change adaptation and rural livelihoods**.He leaves behind a meaningful body of work and a lasting impression on the colleagues and communities he engaged with. His passion for creating more sustainable and resilient food systems will continue to resonate within our field.We extend our sincere condolences to his family, friends, colleagues and all those mourning his loss.

New Research and Publications



SHEFS
SA

SHEFS-SA Research Round-up

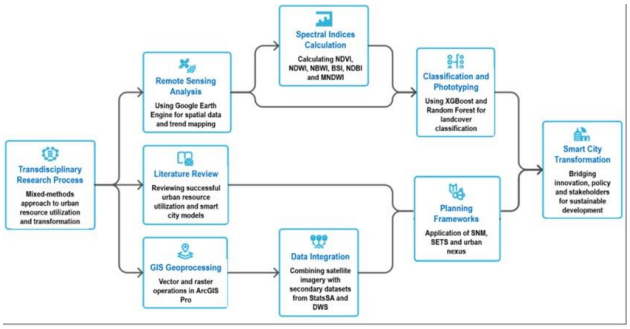


Fig. 2. The transdisciplinary urban methodological framework towards smart city transformation.

2 - **12 August 2026**

Image : L. Nhamo et al.

Title: Strategic integrated nexus planning and smart technologies as pathways to enhancing urban transformation and resilience.

This publication explores how integrated nexus planning and smart technologies can contribute to more resilient, sustainable and data-informed urban development in Gauteng, South Africa.

Authors: Luxon Nhamo, James Magidi, Nafiisa Sobratee-Fajurally and Tinashe L. Dirwai

Read Full Publication here.

El Niño Research Spotlight



3 - Published by Mongabay | 23 August 2026 | By Sean Mowbray

Several recent SHEFS-SA publications have explored different dimensions of El Niño and its implications for people, ecosystems and interconnected food, water and energy systems.

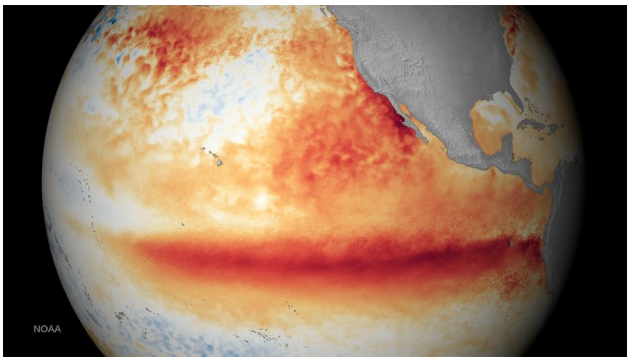
Rather than looking at El Niño as a single climate event, this body of research highlights how its effects can extend across sectors and continue beyond the event itself; from droughts, floods and extreme heat to crop losses, health risks, economic disruption and increased pressure on vulnerable communities.

Together, the publications emphasize the importance of early warning systems, cross-sectoral preparedness and coordinated action to better anticipate and respond to climate-related risks.

This article examines the anticipated 2026–27 El Niño through lessons from previous major events, highlighting the potential cascading impacts on food and water security, energy, health and ecosystems. It emphasizes the importance of early warning systems, integrated preparedness and learning from past events to strengthen resilience to future climate extremes.

Read the full Article here: **World must look to the past to prepare for likely unprecedented El Niño**

Recent research includes: "World must look to the past to prepare for likely unprecedented El Niño"



1. *Published in BMJ | 20 August 2026 | By Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi*

This opinion article examines how the UK's 2026 drought and heatwaves are exposing the interconnected impacts of climate change on water, food security and public health. It also considers how another strong El Niño could intensify these pressures by creating simultaneous climate shocks across food-producing regions and disrupting global supply chains. Drawing lessons from drought-prone regions in sub-Saharan Africa, it emphasises the need for integrated approaches to water management, climate-resilient agriculture, food systems and public health, with investment and preparedness taking place before crises occur.

Read the full article here: The UK drought is a warning: Climate change is a food and public health emergency

2. Published in The Lancet Regional Health – Africa 2026 | *By Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi, Beaula Mutonhodza and Zakari Ali*

The article examines Africa's food security and nutrition challenges, highlighting how climate change, extreme weather and economic pressures are affecting access to affordable, healthy diets. It explores opportunities to build more diverse, resilient and sustainable food systems across the continent. **Read the full article below:**

Reclaiming Africa's lost potential: reflecting on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2026.

3. To close this collection of resources, Prof Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi, offered a deeper discussion on El Niño, its implications for Southern Africa, and what it could mean for water, food systems, agriculture and livelihoods in a recent interview with Lotus Fm in South Africa.

The interview provides a useful opportunity to bring together the themes explored throughout these publications and deepen our understanding of El Niño and the importance of preparedness and resilience.

Listen to the Interview here.

Beyond EL Niño: More research from our community

Could Bambara groundnut play a bigger role in building climate-resilient food systems across Southern Africa?



4 - Ground nuts- Pexels pic

"AquaCrop modelling with frost risk in Southern Africa for bambara groundnut suitability and optimal planting dates".

Simon Lake, Richard Kunz and Prof Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi explore this question in their latest research, exploring where and when the crop could be most suitable, taking into account climate variability and frost risk. Using AquaCrop modelling across 5,838 altitude zones and 49 growing seasons, the study provides a detailed picture of how environmental conditions can shape Bambara groundnut production.

The findings identify October as the most favourable planting month, while also showing how frost can significantly reduce suitable growing areas. The research offers valuable insights for

identifying viable production zones and supporting climate-smart agricultural planning and the wider use of resilient, underutilized crops. **Read the full research** here.

"Leveraging the Integrative Water-Energy-Food Nexus Model (iWEF) in data-scarce areas: Practical application at the local level"



Fig. 1. Location of Sakhisizwe municipality in South Africa.

What happens when communities need to make decisions about water, energy and food, but the data needed to guide those decisions is limited? This study looks at how the Integrative Water-Energy-Food (iWEF) Nexus Model can help bridge that gap, using Sakhisizwe Local Municipality in South Africa's Eastern Cape as a case study. By bringing together available data, local knowledge and participatory approaches, the research provides a clearer picture of the challenges facing these interconnected resources.

The findings point to important gaps in water availability, energy access and agricultural productivity, while showing how challenges in one area can place additional pressure on the others. The study highlights the value of coordinated, locally informed solutions and demonstrates that data scarcity does not have to stand in the way of meaningful planning, resilience and sustainable development.

By: **Luxon Nhamo and Bekithemba Ndlela**

You can read the **full article** **here.**

In Focus: Events Connecting Research, People & Practice



Bringing Climate, Food and Health Conversations Together









In August, the **Future Africa Campus at the University of Pretoria** became a meeting point for researchers, policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders working towards more climate-resilient and equitable food systems.

This was at the heart of two connected events; The **Climate Change, Food Systems and Health International Symposium**, held on 24–25 August, brought together diverse voices to explore the growing connections between climate change, biodiversity, food and nutrition security, poverty and health. Across discussions on food environments, neglected and underutilised crops, and water–energy–food nexus approaches, the focus was on finding practical, inclusive and systems-based pathways towards more resilient food systems.

The conversation continued through the **Food Environment in Transitioning Economies (FETE) Reflection Workshop**, held from 26–28 August. Bringing the consortium together to reflect on three years of research and collaboration, the workshop looked not only at what has been achieved, but also at where the work can go next — from scaling research and strengthening partnerships to securing future opportunities for collaboration. Together, the events created space to **share knowledge, connect ideas and turn evidence into action**, while strengthening the networks needed to support sustainable and equitable food systems into the future.

This was in collaboration with Lancet Countdown Africa Regional Centre, UNU-IWEH, FETE, CTAFS, SHEFS-SA and the Water Research Commission

Submitted **by Dr Wendy Geza**

WEF Nexus In-Person Advanced School: Connecting Knowledge, Practice and Future Pathways





5 - A strong start to the WEF Nexus In-Person Advanced School! | Day 1



6 - Field at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC)



7 - *P*rof Festo Massawe

17–21 August 2026 | Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria

The Water–Energy–Food (WEF) Nexus In-Person Advanced School for the SADC Region and Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) 2026 brought together participants for five days of learning, collaboration and practical engagement around the interconnected challenges of water, energy and food systems.

Building on the online WEF Nexus Masterclass, participants explored systems thinking, governance, policy coherence, investment and evidence-based decision-making. Through case studies from South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania and Malaysia, participants applied tools such as the WEF Nexus Index, ONEPlay, ONEsim and the iWEF Tool to real-world challenges.

A highlight of the programme was a field trip to the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), where participants explored practical approaches including irrigation and water management, innovative growing systems, climate-smart practices and sustainable technologies.

The programme also looked towards the future, with discussions on climate action, biodiversity, sustainable development and career pathways across academia, government, NGOs, industry and consulting.

The week concluded with participants presenting nexus science and evidence-based practice and policy briefs, bringing together the knowledge and perspectives developed throughout the programme.

The Advanced School provided a valuable space to connect science, practice, policy and people, strengthening the capacity to address complex challenges through a more integrated WEF Nexus approach.

Submitted by Sphesihle Duze

Meet our New Team members

We are delighted to welcome **Nhlonipho Penelope Mbatha (Nhlo)** and **Dr Slindile Miya** to the SHEFS-SA community.



*8 - **Nhlonipho Penelope Mbatha (Nhlo)***

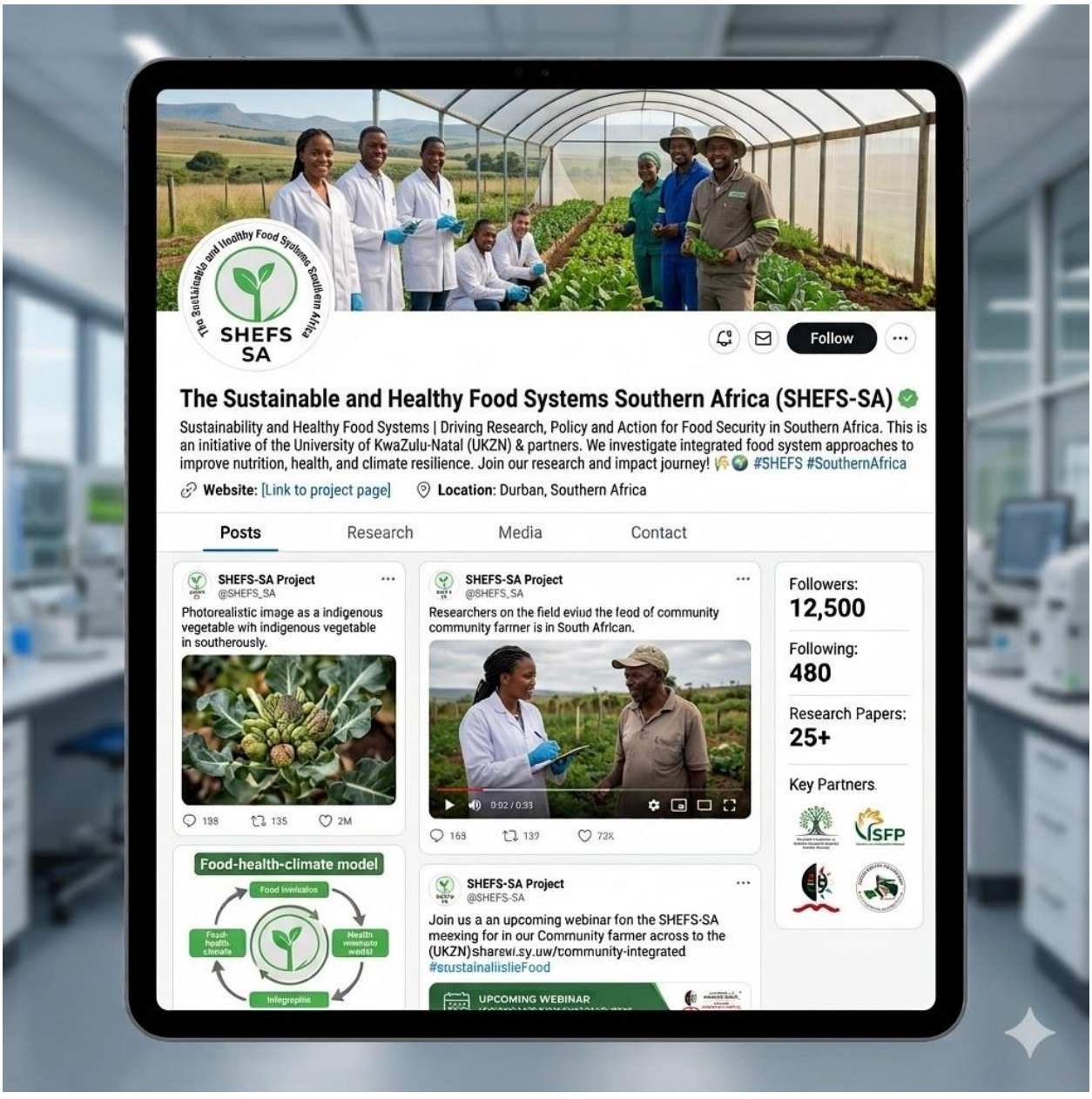
Nhlonipho Penelope Mbatha (Nhlo) joins the SHEFS-SA team to lead the programme's **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)** function. She will support monitoring, reporting and learning across the programme, helping to strengthen processes and capture insights that can inform continuous improvement. As part of this work, Nhlo will engage with Early Career Researchers to trial and refine the revised SHEFS-SA Reporting Tool.



*9 - **Slindile Miya***

Dr Slindile Miya joins the SHEFS-SA Community of Practice and Early Career Researcher Forum. A former member of the Green Team (now CTAFS), Slindile completed her undergraduate, MSc and PhD studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She is now a **Senior Scientist in Seed Science and Technology at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC)**, bringing expertise in seed production, crop physiology and agricultural entrepreneurship, alongside previous experience in academia.

Inside our social media



Are you following us on Social Media? Our digital platforms continue to be an important space for sharing SHEFS-SA research, people and activities with a wider audience.

Across Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok, our content continues to help us bring our work to life. From Countdowns and highlighting events to sharing conversations around food systems, climate, water and sustainability.

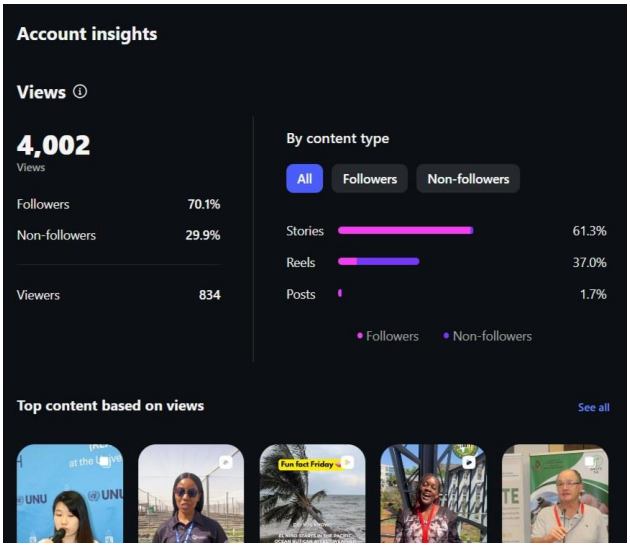


10 - @SHEFSSA

Our Instagram content continues to highlight the people and moments behind SHEFS-SA, giving audiences a visual look into our research, events and community.

Stories and Reels drove the majority of Instagram activity, highlighting the value of short-form and timely content in showcasing SHEFS-SA activities, people and events.

The 29.9% of views from non-followers also shows that our content is reaching beyond our existing Instagram community.



*11 - **4,002***

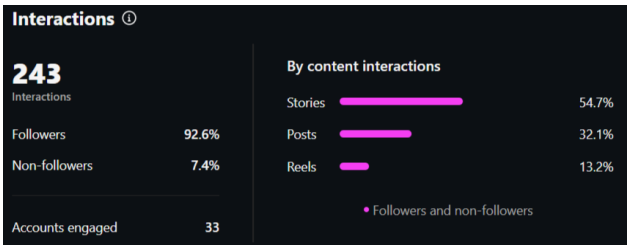
Views

834

Viewers

29.9%

Views from non-followers



12 - @SHEFSSA

TikTok allows us to communicate SHEFS-SA themes in a more accessible and engaging format, bringing research, events and key conversations to new audiences through short-form video.

In the Past 30 days, TikTok recorded **3.1K total viewers** over the last 28 days, representing a **189.71% increase** compared with the previous period.

The platform also attracted **2.9K new viewers**, an impressive **716.43% increase**, showing growing reach beyond our existing audience. Peak viewer activity in the most recent 7-day period was recorded on **14 September, between 12am and 1am**



13 -

- ***3.1K** total viewers*
- ***2.9K** new viewers*
- ***+189.71%** growth in total viewers*
- ***+716.43%** growth in new viewers*

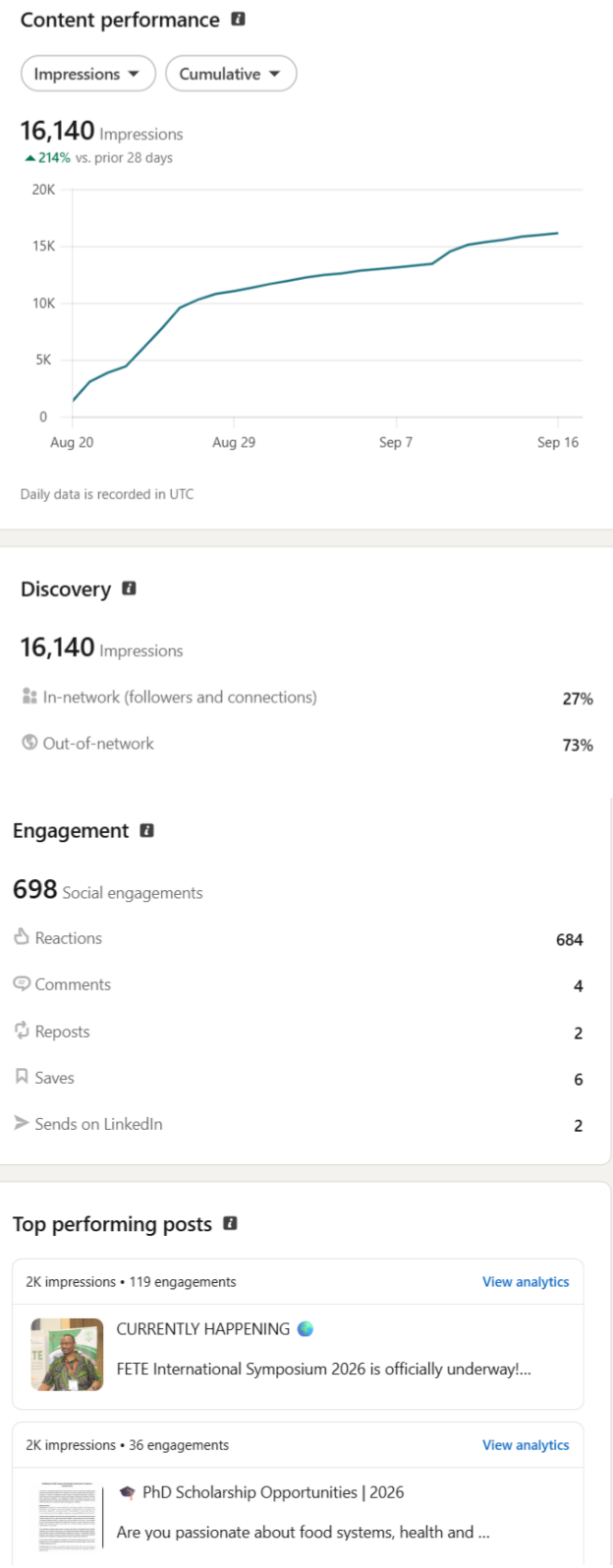




LinkedIn provides a space to share deeper insights into our programmes, research activities, partnerships and professional community, connecting our work with a broader academic and professional audience,

LinkedIn continues to be our strongest-performing platform, with steady growth in followers, views and engagement since the launch and expansion of our WEF Nexus and FACE activities.

The response to our content suggests a growing interest in research-led conversations, educational events and opportunities to engage with pressing food-system challenges. Content around the WEF Nexus Advanced School, in particular, has provided an opportunity to share insights on the interconnectedness of water, energy and food systems, while highlighting the people, knowledge and practical learning behind the programme.



Across all three platforms, our focus remains the same: making our work more visible, accessible and connected to the people and communities we serve. our social media is

increasingly becoming a space to share knowledge, showcase collaboration and make research more accessible beyond the academic environment.

Follow us and stay connected: @Shefssa

Instagram | LinkedIn | TikTok

SHEFS-SA in Zimbabwe: Exploring Climate Resilient food systems in Chimanimani



Chimanimani district In Zimbabwe

A Multidisciplinary SHEFS-SA team from Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa recently visited Chimanimani District to explore how climate change and extreme events are affecting food systems, water, nutrition, health and livelihoods. Through Engagements with communities and visits to nutrition gardens, irrigation schemes, aquaculture ponds and water points, the team identified both ongoing challenges, and the local knowledge, innovation and resilience already presents in communities.

The visit will inform the next phase of SHEFS-SA research, moving towards co-designed research and locally relevant solutions.

Submitted by **Maud Muchuweti**



15 - Community members and researcher discussing Local climate

From Research to Reach: Strengthening Communication for Impact



16 - Faith Nduya- Malawi

Congratulations to Faith Kiarah Ndunya, Communications Assistant with the SHEFS-SA Malawi team, on her admission to the Master of Arts in Strategic Communications at the University of Malawi.

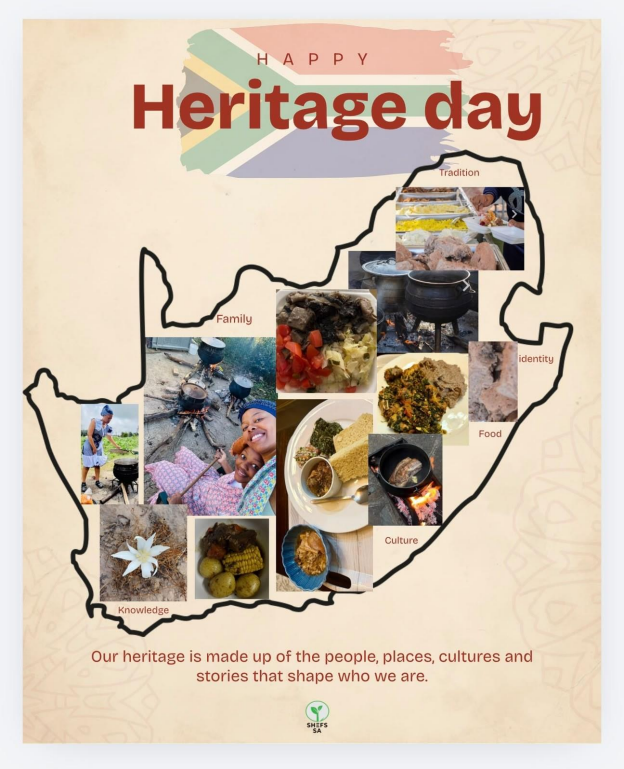
The two-year programme will strengthen her skills in research communication, knowledge translation, stakeholder engagement and strategic storytelling supporting SHEFS-SA's efforts to make research more accessible, engaging and impactful.

As Faith begins this new chapter, she hopes to bring her learning back into her work with SHEFS-SA, helping bridge the gap between research and the communities, policymakers and audiences it seeks to reach.

"Research creates knowledge. Strategic communication helps that knowledge travel."

We celebrated!





Celebrating Heritage Through Food, Culture and Community

On Heritage Day, we celebrated the diverse cultures, traditions and lived experiences that shape our relationship with food, people, and places. From traditional food and indigenous plants to knowledge passed down through generations, food is powerful expression of identity, connection and belonging.

The celebration highlighted the importance of recognizing the preserving cultural; and indigenous knowledge while creating space for diverse communities and perspectives in shaping more suistainable, resilient and equitable food systems.

Around the Table: Heritage Month feast



17 - Our traditional feast



18 - Captured: Prof Ngidi working in the field



19 - Amadumbe neMfino



20 - Spinach



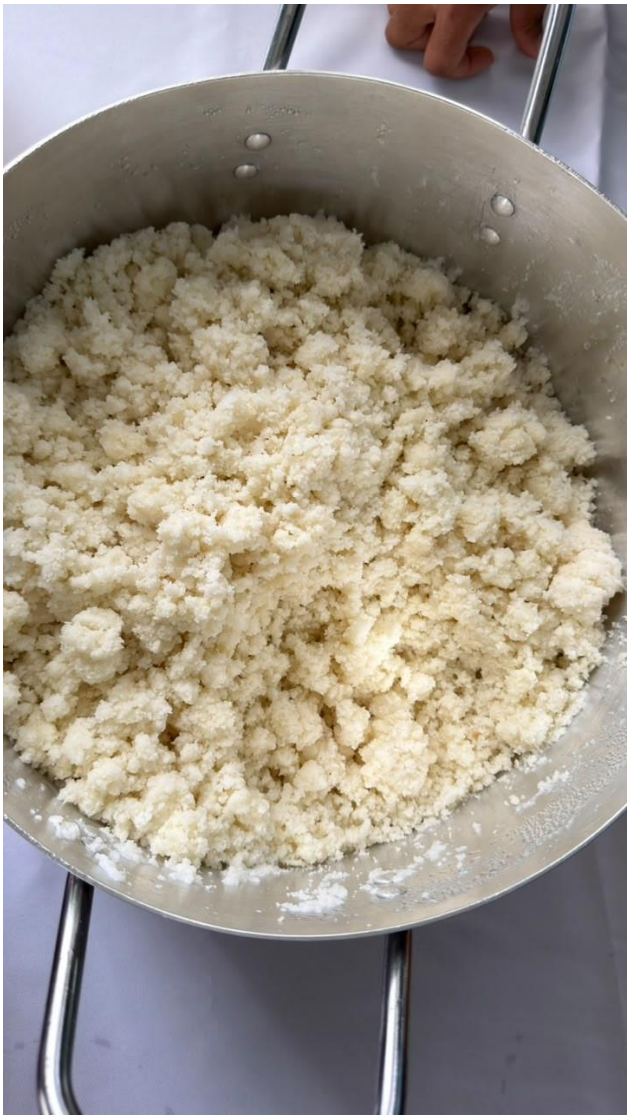
21 - Ujeqe



22 - Amahewu



23 - Captured Dr North and a visiting student working in the field



24 - Uphuthu

Every team has a rhythm, and ours seems to be keeping time over meals. This Heritage Month, our coordination team gathered around a table at Mrs Buthelezi's home, set with traditional dishes, each one carrying the flavours, stories, and skills passed down through generations. Umleqwa, uJeqe, iMfino, uphuthu, isobho, Usu, ubhata, amadumbe, uBhontshisi-all absolutely delicious. Between the shared plates, conversations, and the drinks that arrived just when they were needed, we found ourselves celebrating our diversity, who we are and where we come from. Across cultures, food has always been humanity's oldest invitation: a way of saying "sit down, you belong here." We had a lot of conversations about current affairs, but it was around the table, so they didn't feel heavy, and the conversations after our tummies were full and we were happy were what truly brought us together.

Submitted by **Mendy Ndlovu**

NEXT-UP: We have upcoming events you should look forward to!



17-18 November 2026 SHEFS-SA Annual Symposium

The **SHEFS-SA Annual Symposium 2026**, themed *"Innovating Food Systems from the Ground Up: Connecting Local Solutions, Research and Digital Technologies,"* will bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, communities and innovators to explore pathways towards **inclusive, resilient and technology-enabled food systems**.

📍 **Symposium:** 17–18 November 2026

Please don't forget to share your news for the next update!



We are always looking for stories to share. If you have an exciting story to share or are not certain, please reach out to Sphesihle or Mendy for the next update.