

MANDELA DAY 2025 REPORT

Compiled by the Engagement Office



Introduction

This year is the fourth year that Mandela University's Engagement Office has facilitated the institution's Mandela Day efforts. It also marks the second year that the University has focused its efforts in the area of Gelvandale, deepening its partnership with the school's Hostel of Hope.

This year's Mandela Day theme was "It is still in your hands to combat poverty and inequity."

Located in an area facing severe poverty, inequity, food insecurity, and crime, the Hostel of Hope aims to become a safe, dignified space where learners and community members can thrive. Building on the vision that began in with Mandela Day 2023, this year's activities sought to deepen the work that had begun, and better understand how to work with the community, for the community.

View previous Mandela Day Reports here:

2023



2024



Mandela Week challenges us to live out Madiba's values. This initiative is our way of walking alongside our communities, rebuilding what was lost, and reigniting what was always there: our shared humanity.

– Wensley Jackson, Project Coordinator, Engagement Office

Background and Strategic Intent

Nelson Mandela Day 2025 marked a catalytic opportunity to deepen Nelson Mandela University's long-term, place-based collaboration with Gelvandale High School and its Hostel of Hope. Situated in Helenvale, Gqeberha, an area affected by systemic poverty, crime, and food insecurity, the Hostel of Hope project embodies the values of dignity, care, and community-led development.

The Mandela Day 2023 activation at Gelvandale High School, themed Climate, Food and Solidarity, served as the foundation for this partnership, transforming Mandela Day from a symbolic gesture into a springboard for sustainable engagement. The 2025 initiative builds

on this momentum to advance an integrated response aligned with the University's broader engagement strategy and commitment to inclusive student access for success, social justice and a demonstration of what a civic university can look like.

Mandela Day 2025 Theme: Contributing towards dignity and growing hope

This year's activation centred on infrastructural dignity, educational opportunity, food security and wellness. Mandela Day 2025 mobilised stakeholders around tangible contributions such as material, financial, and programmatic work to deepen the hostel's transformation into a safe, dignified, and enabling space for learning and community growth.

Mandela Day 2025 Strategic Objectives



1. Catalyse Programmatic Integration:

Align Mandela Day activities with ongoing and emerging programmes, including food sovereignty, youth development, and after-school learning initiatives.



2. Activate Multi-Stakeholder Involvement:

Bring together university staff, students, community organisations, alumni, government partners, and local businesses in a unified effort.



3. Strengthen the Hostel as a Hub of Hope:

Respond to co-identified priorities including safety, nutrition, maintenance, and digital access, rooted in the vision shared during post- Mandela Day 2023 workshops, for the hostel to be:

“A space of love, safety and dignity where learners and the community can flourish.”

We aimed to achieve these objectives across three days within and beyond the hostel. Each day is captured below as a celebration of what was achieved, and a reminder of what we want to continue.





Day for People with Disabilities

Mandela Week kicked off at the Helenvale Resource Centre, inviting people with disabilities from the Gelvandale community to participate in a range of activities.

The day began with the Helenvale poets – a group of writers working under the Bay Creative Writing Development Project (BCWDP), designed to allow participants to use the artistic, written word to explore and question their surroundings, and to find their place and voice. It is designed to develop poetry writing skills, understanding of poetry, of writing processes including editing, of book production and also of the marketplace and entrepreneurship. Thus, life skills are merged with artistic expression.

The **Department of Sports and Recreation** facilitated a fun aerobics session, showing participants simple but meaningful movements they can do on a regular basis to better take care of themselves, including modifications depending on their mobility.

Read more about the important work they do here.



Thereafter, the **Department of Social Development** shared a brief presentation on topics including the services they offer, what community members can expect of them, as well as some basic tips as it relates to raising children with different learning disabilities in the home.

Mandela University's Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (**CriSHET**) presented a session on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention. This included sobering statistics of GBV in the country, as well as how participants can better prevent GBV in their own community.

Mandela University's **Law Clinic** also provided a session for participants, focusing on legal guidance and assistance. The team shared real-life scenarios and responded to questions participants had around wills, restraining orders and other questions community members raised.

Each of these sessions offered services that are often out of reach for community members. Long lines and waiting times mean basic government services can be inaccessible in communities like Gelvandale. More so, the day created a space to be heard, seen and celebrated. One outcome from the day was the formation of a committee of people with disabilities who are interested in working with the university to better understand how to collectively respond to some of the socio-economic challenges faced by the community.





A Day of Care and Conversation - Honouring Our Elders

The second day of Mandela Week took place at the Gelvandale High School Hostel, with a focus on honouring the elderly in the community. Once more, we were joined by the **Helenvale Poets** who opened the day with some of their inspiring poetry pieces.

The session was primarily facilitated by **Mandela University's Social Development Professions Department**. Participants were invited to share their expectations for the day, which ranged from interest in the sessions such as legal assistance, to simply wanting to spend the day out.





The **Department of Sports and Recreation** took participants onto the hostel grounds for some fun, team-building aerobic activities. Again, the purpose of the session was to show participants some easy, but useful exercises they can do to better care for their physical well-being.



The **Department of Social Development** presented an engaging session on the topic of nutrition. Here, the basics of nutrition were unpacked, and practical examples of nutritious food sources most participants could access were shared.

Mandela University's Law Clinic presented a session on legal assistance, focusing on the legal rights of participants, as well unpacking wills. Many participants expressed interest in knowing more, and were reminded that the Law Clinic's services would be on offer at Mandela Day the following day for individual cases to be addressed.



The session ended with a fun dance-off, where the winners received a nail voucher. Thereafter, participants could all enjoy the pampering station set up by the School Governing Body.



Mandela Day 2025

Building on the momentum of Day One and Day Two, Mandela Day itself was a well-attended event, bringing together Mandela University staff and students with organisations and community members etc.

Chaplain Fumanekile Kula from the Naval Base Gq-eberha shared an opening prayer. Thereafter, Mandela University's DVC: ETP shared an opening and welcome speech to remind colleagues of the importance of the day. The high school's principal, SGB chairperson, and Mandela University's VC all shared their messages of support, reminding us of Madiba's legacy and the importance of continuing it not just on Mandela Day, but every day.

Thereafter, the **Helenvale Poets** shared some of their pieces again.

Participants were introduced to the seven different sites across the hostel ground that they could participate in. The sites were as follows:



SITE 1:

YARD CLEANING



This included landscaping, tree trimming and general ground maintenance.



SITE 2 and 3:

MALE AND FEMALE DORMITORY

Below is some feedback from site lead Jonathan Joseph, project assistant in the Engagement Office:

"Each block had multiple rooms, along with two communal showers, toilets, hand basins, and a small kitchen area with a single sink.

I divided our team into two groups, assigning each group to a specific dormitory. We worked from the top floors down, making sure every area was cleaned thoroughly. This included removing dirt and waste, scrubbing toilets, basins, and showers, sweeping and mopping the floors, and placing mattresses back onto bed frames to prepare the rooms for use.



It was very rewarding to contribute towards improving the living space for the learners. Some of the team members were so touched by the conditions that they decided to return every two weeks to continue cleaning and also collect donations to further improve the dormitories. This ongoing commitment showed how the act of service can inspire long-term positive impact."

SITE 4:

HALL PAINTING

Here, participants painted the hall to bring some life to the space students spend so much time in.



SITE 5:

GARDENING

SITE 6:

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The **Department of Social Development** offered consultations for community members.

SITE 7:

MOBILE LAW CLINIC

The **Mobile Law Clinic** offered legal services to community members.

SITE 8:

PHARMACY

The **Pharmacy Department** provided pharmaceutical services to the Gelvandale Community.



The services that were provided included screening patients for Blood Pressure, Diabetes, lung function tests and the provision of information and advice on the safe and correct use of medicines.

The team of pharmacists and administration staff saw a number of 60 patients within a period of 3 hours. The services were well received by the community, with some members thanking us for the initiative. Some patients attested that they were woken up by friends to the services being provided and decided to join us for the free screening tests. The three tests combined could cost anything between R60 to R90 depending on which pharmacy the patient visits, alternatively patients have to wait in long queues to access such services in the DOH clinics.



We are also proud to share that over 650 donations were received for the Hostel of Hope. These included toiletries, cleaning supplies, non-perishable food items, blankets — resources that will go a long way in meeting the immediate needs of students at the hostel and the neighbouring school.

AFTER 18 JULY STEM Access Initiative hope

As a continuation of Mandela Day, the Govan Mbeki Mathematics Development Centre (GMMDC) donated 13 Proline 7" tablets and a collection of printed workbooks, known as TAPS Guides, to the Gelvandale Hostel of Hope in a once-off effort to expand access to digital and STEM learning. Inspired by Madiba's enduring belief that "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," the initiative aimed to empower both learners and educators through meaningful, peer-supported digital learning and teaching resources.



After a few hours of activity, the Hostel's Matron shared a brief vote of thanks.

View a video here:

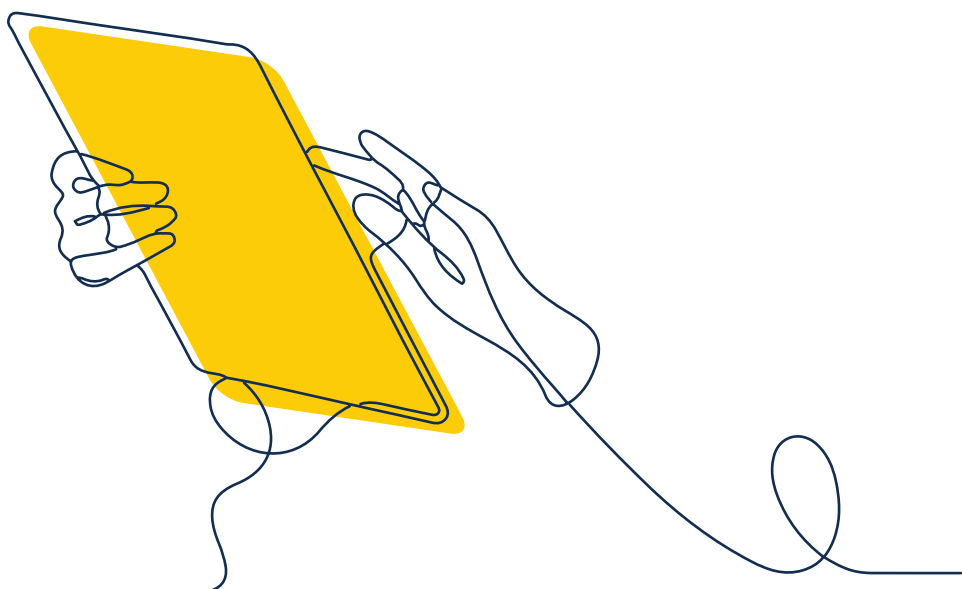




The tablets were preloaded with a carefully curated selection of offline Mathematics and Physical Sciences resources, including the CAPS-aligned MobiTutorZA software, which enables effective teaching and learning even in contexts without internet connectivity. This forms part of GMMDC's innovative hybrid techno-blended model.

A joint training session was hosted on 25 July 2025, once learners and staff had returned to school for the third term. By identifying 15 champion learners across Grades 10 to 12 to receive this training – alongside key staff – the school began building an internal network of digital leaders who could support their peers in navigating the educational software and become learning mentors. This intervention is also well-timed to support Grade 12 learners as they prepare for their Trial and Final examinations.

This donation marked more than just the provision of devices—it represented a gateway to opportunity, encouraging collaboration, digital confidence, and a deeper engagement with STEM learning in a way that truly honours the spirit of Mandela Day.



Conclusion

Mandela Day 2025 was not simply a one-day event but part of a growing, long-term commitment by Mandela University to walk alongside the Gelvandale community in pursuit of dignity, hope, and justice. Through a week of intentional, inclusive, and hands-on engagement, the initiative deepened relationships, responded to community-expressed needs, and reaffirmed the importance of place-based partnership in transforming lives and spaces.

From legal and health services to food and infrastructure support, the week demonstrated the power of collaboration — uniting students, staff, community members, government departments, and local organisations in meaningful action. It also highlighted the importance of sustaining this momentum, with the Hostel of Hope continuing to serve as a hub for holistic development, safety, and learning.

As we reflect on this year's theme — contributing towards dignity and growing hope — we are reminded that real transformation takes time, trust, and shared effort. Mandela Day 2025 offered not only practical support but also moments of joy, connection, and care. It is through such continued collaboration that we honour Madiba's legacy — not in words, but in action.



**THANK YOU FOR VIEWING THE
NELSON MANDELA DAY REPORT**

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