



S.E.T. for socio-economic growth

National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF)

media release

Unlocking the power of information: World Development Information Day and Prof Onesimo Mutanga's remarkable journey in advancing science and development

Importance of disseminating information: The dissemination of information is the lifeblood of an informed and empowered society, as it ensures that knowledge, insights, and discoveries are accessible to all. By sharing information widely and transparently, we bridge gaps in understanding, stimulate innovation, and foster collaboration among individuals and communities. It empowers people to make informed decisions, advocate for their rights, and participate in the democratic process, ultimately promoting transparency, accountability, and social progress. In a world where access to information is a fundamental right, its dissemination becomes a cornerstone of equality, opportunity, and collective growth.

World Development Information Day, 24 October: In 1972, the United Nations General Assembly designated the 24th of October as World Development Information Day, to be observed annually. The main objective of this important day is to spotlight the developmental hurdles we face and underscore the critical requirement for enhanced international collaboration in tackling them. This occasion underscores the importance of disseminating information, mobilising public opinion, and raising awareness about development issues, thereby encouraging collaborative efforts to foster growth and development worldwide.

Science and technology: In order to advance their socio-economic development, developing countries must continue to increase their investment in research and technological development, as this is the cornerstone of competitiveness in the world. They must continue their concerted efforts, with appropriate assistance from the rest of the world, in expanding their capability to apply science and technology for socio-economic development, so as to enable the technological gap to be significantly reduced.

Prof Onesimo Mutanga, [winner](#) of a 2023 NSTF-South32 [Engineering Research Capacity Development Award](#) is a proponent of development and is also passionate about empowering young people. Prof Mutanga's research is focused on using remote sensing to aid environmental management that monitors the health of vegetation in forests, rangeland, and cropland. The research has contributed to knowledge on the development of such techniques, based on remote sensing, to characterise vegetation quality, quantity, invasive species spread, crop health and productivity, among other variables. This knowledge is gathered in support of precision farming, rangeland and forest resource management.



Its uniqueness is the creation and improvement of approaches and products that are timely and up-to-date as well as being adaptable to the poor countries of the global South.

He is a Professor: Remote Sensing; and Chair: DSI/NRF/Nedbank South African Research Chair Initiative in Land Use Planning and Management, at University of KwaZulu-Natal. So far, Prof Mutanga has helped 58 students obtain their MSc qualifications and 32 obtain their PhD's in spatial sciences. He contends: "I feel so happy and satisfied when I see them ululating at graduation with their families, brothers and sisters". Prof Mutanga is passionate about the pursuit and imparting of information for society's progress. He received the prestigious [2023 NSTF-South32 Award](#) for developing research capacity through the use of remote sensing techniques to support land use management focusing on the development of the science and the application of these techniques for terrestrial ecosystems. The Engineering Research Capacity Development Award is sponsored by Eskom since 2003.

About the NSTF ([National Science and Technology Forum](#)): NSTF is an independent non-profit [stakeholder body and network](#) – a civil-society forum of [organisations involved in science, engineering, technology \(SET\) and innovation in SA](#).

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References/Sources

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/development-information-day>

<https://www.pratidintime.com/education/world-development-information-day-promoting-cooperation-and-awareness-for-global-progress>

About the NSTF

The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), established in 1995:

- is a broadly-representative stakeholder body for all science, engineering and technology (SET) and innovation organisations in South Africa
- gathers stakeholders around burning issues of national and global interest, across the public and private sectors, including matters of public policy
- includes a network of professional societies in SET and STEM education (STEM = science, technology, engineering and mathematics) - the NSTF proSET membership sector.
- recognises, awards and profiles the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups to SET and innovation through the prestigious NSTF Awards
- runs and supports collaborative projects and youth outreach, including recognition of top performance in mathematics and science, role modelling, bursary and STEM career information
- runs and supports the STEMulator.org which attracts youth and educators to Explore>Discover>Learn the world of STEM including careers. (Established by NSTF proSET)

For more information

www.nstf.org.za

E-mail: enquiries@nstf.org.za

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