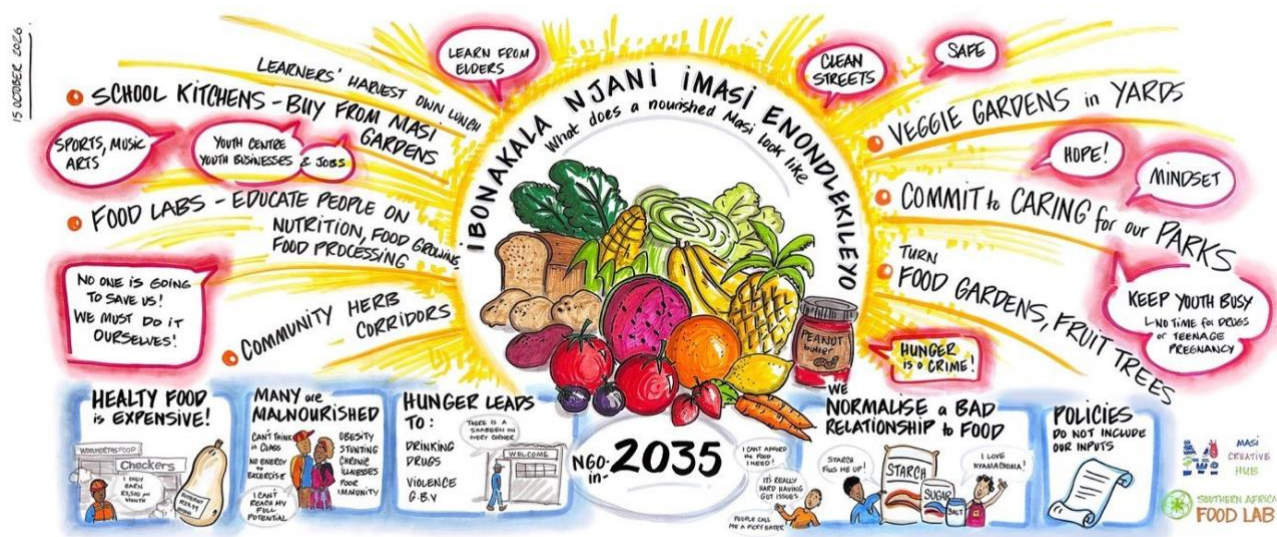


Southern Africa Food Lab and Masi Creative Hub · Masiphumelele, Cape Town · 15 October 2026



Graphic recording of the dialogue by Graphic Harvest.

In recognition of World Food Day 2026, *Innovate Today*, *Nourish Tomorrow*, the Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL) and Masi Creative Hub (MCH) hosted a youth dialogue in Masiphumelele (Masi), Cape Town, on Thursday 15 October 2026.

KEY MESSAGES

- Young people in Masi know what a nourished Masi needs: affordable healthy food, nutrition knowledge, safe spaces and work.
- They named cost, eating habits and limited agency as the main barriers, and they know that nobody is coming to rescue them.
- Three first actions were agreed: take ownership of the parks and stop illegal dumping, vote, and join the courses at Masi Creative Hub.

At a glance

Event	Youth Dialogue, Masiphumelele, Cape Town
Date and time	Thursday 15 October 2026, 10:00–12:00
Venue	Desmond Tutu Mpilo Health Park, Sunnyside (Masiphumelele)
Themes	World Food Day 2026: Innovate Today, Nourish Tomorrow. SA Food Lab: What does a nourished Masi of 2035 look like?
Participants	26 young people aged 18–30; 4 speakers
Facilitation	Yandi and Lwando (Masi Creative Hub); graphic facilitation by Graphic Harvest

The dialogue was a youth-designed conversation about the current reality of food and nutrition security in Masi. Its aim was to surface what is known and what is happening now, alongside what is not, and to use that to design a vision of a nourished Masi in 2035. It made clear that Masi's youth understand the linkages and actions needed to build a nourished Masi by 2035, and that they know nobody is coming to rescue them. In summary, as one young woman said, "If you want the change you must make the change in yourself."

Purpose and approach

Why we met. The World Food Day 2026 theme, *Innovate Today, Nourish Tomorrow*, prompted SAFL to gather youth voices and create a vision for a food-secure future. The dialogue was hosted in partnership with Masi Creative Hub in Masi, on the outskirts of Cape Town.

Objectives. *Short term:* by the end of the two hours, participants have described a nourished Masi in 2035, chosen two or three practical opportunities and named who could take each forward. *Long term:* strengthen Masi Creative Hub's ambition to have youth voices inform food and nutrition decisions in Masiphumelele, with at least one youth-supported initiative under way within 12 months.

How it ran. Welcome and check-in; four short speakers on what we see and do not see; partner reflection; small groups imagining Masi in 2035; groups choosing opportunities and actions; and report back with personal commitments. The dialogue was conducted in isiXhosa and English.

Who was in the room

Signed up / attended	20 signed up / 26 attended
Age range	18–30; majority under 25
Gender mix	60% young women / 40% young men
Situation	Most were unemployed; several volunteer with NGO initiatives in Masi
Speakers	Four Masi youth speakers
Others present	SA Food Lab team; a journalist from Ground Up

Who was missing: university students who have previously taken part in research in the area.



Participants gather for the opening session.



Yandi welcoming dialogue participants.

What we heard: seeing the full picture

Four Masi youth speakers shared what they see and hear in Masi today, including what is working and what is missing. Their inputs and the pair reflections are grouped by theme below. Quotes are in participants' own words.

Cost and access	Healthy food is expensive: "Starchy food is cheaper than fresh vegetables." "Food prices are too expensive – if people are shopping at Checkers and Woolworths, why is there not more financial support for good food in those stores?" Access to healthy meals was one of the big lessons of COVID. Donations to schools are often not what people want to eat or what they should be eating.
Hunger, trauma and violence	Health assessments in the area found many children and teenagers eating only one basic meal a day, which limits their physical and cognitive development. "Along with hunger come so many other challenges, including alcohol abuse and violence." "Violence is on the

	rise in Masi.” “It’s been a long time since we understood the problem and we still seem to be having the same conversations.” During six months of door-to-door pandemic preparedness research in 2024, people did not want to talk about the trauma of COVID, including the wounds of being refused participation in funerals, and of hunger.
Eating habits and our relationship with food	“We have a problem with a relationship with food, as Black people. We reward children with food – that can lead to unhealthy associations. We need more knowledge about nutrition, such as the importance of drinking amasi.” “Grew up thinking our food must be seasoned. Too much salt, too much sugar.” “We love Nyamachoma – (salt and spices brand) – and it’s used in everything from smiley’s to chicken feet and fish and chips, very salty, excessive salt .” “We have normalised what we ate at home and continue to eat it into adulthood. We need to stop normalising unhealthy diets. It’s hard when you learn what a healthy diet is. Two damn weeks at Chrysalis Academy eating chicken without salt, cornflakes without sugar.” Special dietary needs: “As an African child growing up in Masi, there is not a lot of education; you eat what is available. As someone who has gut issues, you are not able to eat the correct diet because it’s not affordable. The only way to get the education is to seek it out yourselves. When you can’t eat something because it’s going to do something to your stomach, you are seen as a picky eater. I really love this topic about food because it’s something that I can relate to.”
Knowledge, education and rights	More education is needed, despite how much is already happening. “Most of the people only like to shop in supermarkets; children are fed, but they are not nourished.” Rights: “Section 27 – we all have the right to food – we’re learning a lot from the Union Against Hunger, we are seeing what obesity is, and what stunting is.” Before Masi Creative Hub was established, there were no spaces in Masi where people learnt about good food. “The clinic only tells you the problem, not what you need to do.” There were also no spaces for Masi residents to have a voice in the policies that affect them and their access to quality diets. This led to the creation of Masi Creative Hub: not just food gardens, but education and youth engagement.
Agency and government	Agency: “I don’t see enough youth oomph”, “Not enough agency and willingness to take action for ourselves.” Government cannot be relied on: “No one is coming to save you, young people. Our government did not show up during COVID; it’s not going to show up now that you are unemployed.”

What stood out in the pair reflections

“We focus too much on salty food, on what’s unhealthy for us.” “We need a safe environment.” “Ramaphosa is not coming; the government must stop overpromising and overdelivering.”

Feedback closed with a call from Lwando: “Youth, let’s take charge!” It took Yandi and Lwando to rally the group into giving that call a real voice.



A participant speaks to the group, “don’t be afraid to roar!”



In front of the Masi Creative Hub banner.



“There’s a fire, run!” Lwando led a high-energy exercise to form pairs for the opening reflection.

A nourished Masi in 2035

What does a healthy, well-fed Masi look like in 2035?

Young leaders work together, stand up for what is right. Who are the leaders? We – the '2-Ks' – we are leaders. We have the energy, the vibe, the skills, the sense of hope necessary to make the place happy and free. We will restore the heart of Masi. If you want a better tomorrow – look in the mirror and change something, change yourself.

Schools, food and growing

- Every school has a food garden, planted and maintained by the students as part of the life skills curriculum.
- School food schemes are managed by gogos, who are provided with 50% of the food from the vegetable gardens.
- The Masi Food Lab is alive and flourishing. Gogos are trained there, and it is not only about cooking but also about gardens, creating education and job opportunities, so that there is no space in your life and mind for alcohol and drugs.
- Current illegal dumping sites are useful, productive gardens, becoming healthy green corridors in Masi.

Safe, healthy people and families

- Peer pressure is no longer about bullying and school dropout but about self-care and pride in the community and its streets.
- Gender equality ensures that women are not the only ones responsible for the education and care of children. Children are respectful of the teachings of their mother and father.
- Safe homes and safe streets are informed by a good knowledge of what it takes to stay hygienic and clean, to make space for growing, and of the dangers of alcohol addiction and drugs.
- Through education and by building opportunities for individual dignity, youth ignorance about the body has been replaced by respect for your body and sexuality. There is access to sports facilities, young women have jobs and do not think that dating older men is a solution to anything, and unwanted teenage pregnancy is a thing of the past.

Jobs and enterprise

- There is funding for coaches, event managers and counsellors to support not just mental and physical health but also entrepreneurship in the community.
- Youth have started companies doing everything from clothing design to food.



Small groups capture their ideas on flipchart paper.



The graphic recording takes shape through collective efforts during the dialogue.



A group reports its vision for Masi 2035.

Common elements across groups

- **Food:** affordable fresh food close to home
- **Health:** knowledge of what it takes for children and adults to eat well
- **Jobs:** job creation, local food enterprises employing young people, and entrepreneurship
- **Growing spaces:** turning dumping zones into green spaces, and community and household gardens

Where groups differed: groups differed in their degree of concern for gender equity, perhaps a function of who was in each group.

Opportunities and actions

The dialogue concluded with an agreement for the participants to take ownership of the parks: to be champions in stopping illegal dumping and in turning the parks into beautiful, productive areas.

Importantly, Yandi advised that the most immediate and powerful action the group could take was to vote and to encourage everybody they knew to vote. She explained that there was once a time when she thought it was her right, and a signal of her disinterest in what political parties were offering, not to vote. Now she understands that not voting is in fact a form of voting: it simply gives your vote to whoever else turns up to vote. The first step in realising the Masi 2035 vision is for the youth of Masi is to vote for the local government elections on 4 November, 2026.



Yandi opened and closed the dialogue with a vibrant, hopeful call to action.

Opportunity	Already happening in Masi?	Who could take it forward	What young people can do
Joining the course run at Masi Creative Hub	Yes, but there is always space for more learning and more participants	MCH	Turn up! Visit MCH and see what's on offer.
Citizen agency	Yes, but only in small groups	All participants: finding ways to take action by eating healthier food, teaching others and understanding your rights	Vote Take opportunities to learn about healthy food Participate in community gardens
Reclaiming green spaces	Limited	Collective effort under the guidance of MCH	Volunteer to help clean up and to be part of the planting and maintenance group

Cross-cutting points: several groups spoke about access to information on nutrition and recognised that habits begun in childhood are hard to change without understanding why change is necessary.

Reflections and lessons learned

- **What worked well:** many participants arrived almost an hour early and were excited to talk about something that matters to each of them. The ease and energy of the conversation, facilitated in a fluid and relaxed way, worked well, and holding the conversations almost entirely in isiXhosa made for easy, confident communication.
- **What we would change:** offer something to eat on arrival, not just at the end of the session.
- **What surprised us:** shared knowledge of the challenge and of what good dietary quality means was high, even though all participants cited lack of knowledge as a barrier.