

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR

**THE
HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES**





CONTENTS



1. Who is the NIHSS?

2. What does the organisation stand for?

3. Why is it relevant to people like me?

4. How does the NIHSS create value?

5. When and where do I see NIHSS in action?

04

05

06

07

13

1. WHO IS THE NIHSS?

The Institute is a statutory body, set up by law by the Minister of Higher Education in December 2013, to respond to the concern that the humanities and social sciences are neglected. For many valid reasons, the new South Africa (i.e. post-1994) put a lot of emphasis on what was historically deemed “scarce and critical skills” in science, engineering and technology (SET).

Yet, to evolve as a people (humans in society) we depend on outputs from the humanities and social sciences. The humanities and social sciences hold the keys to unlock future potential for greater equity, justice and social responsibility. In 2013, all indications were that vital disciplines in this broad humanities and social sciences field were in dire need of intervention to arrest their decline and stimulate and rejuvenate research activity.

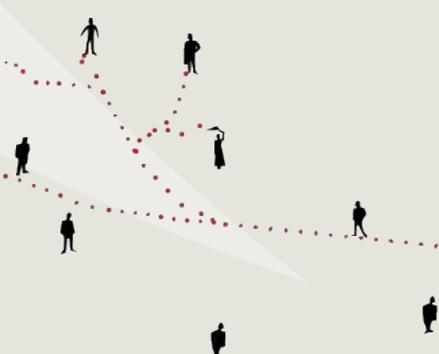
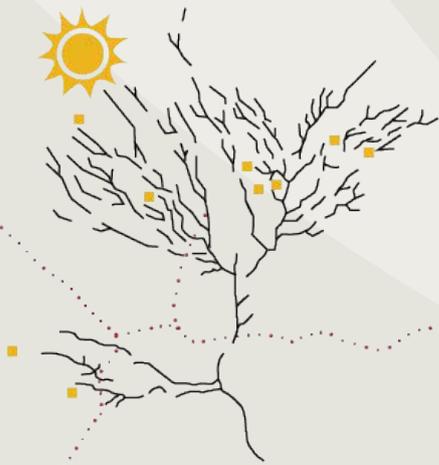
Within the framework of the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013), approved by Cabinet, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) thus established the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) to stimulate research and postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences.

The NIHSS is therefore not a university or a place of learning. It is a fully fledged organisation with

the unique competency set and sole mandate to build humanities and social sciences (HSS) capacity to produce knowledge. It ring-fences funding to stimulate research, shift debates and incubate ideas that will reignite the intellectual fires in the humanities and social sciences.

The NIHSS works with existing public university structures, think tanks, and research bodies in the higher education sphere to advance research, teaching and learning in the humanities and social sciences. It funds, coordinates and form partnerships with stakeholders to co-create solutions that will bolster outputs – whether those be in the form of research, graduates or advice.

The influence of the NIHSS work extends across country borders and into the wider African continent, as well as across the Global South (comprising Latin America and developing Asia and including the Middle East). Apart from its academic programmes in South Africa, the NIHSS manages the very successful African Pathways Programme, and a number of international research collaborations with BRICS partners like India; in 2015, the NIHSS assumed responsibility for coordinating and managing all BRICS Think Tank Council, BRICS Academic Forum and related activities on behalf of South Africa.



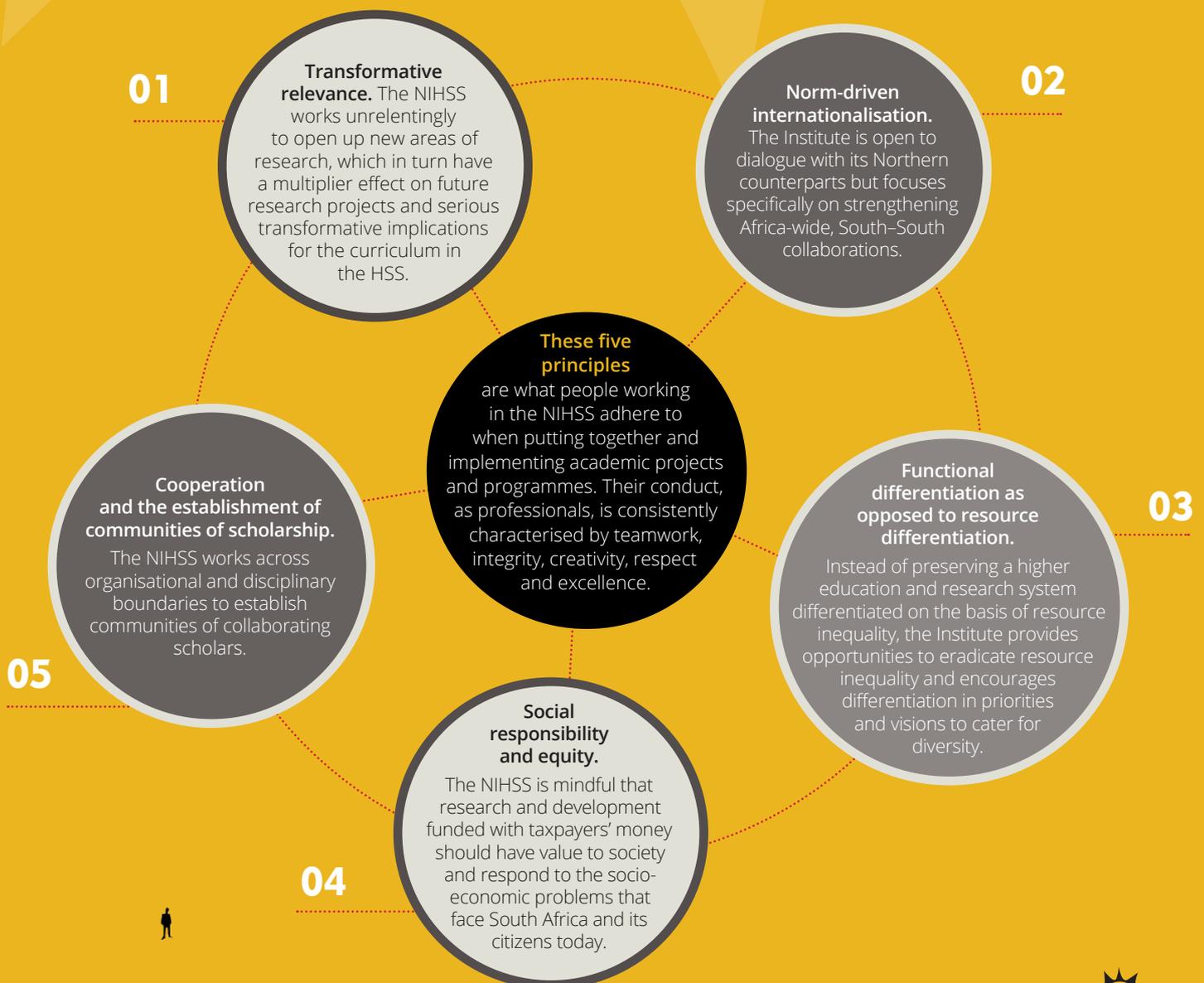
2. WHAT DOES THE ORGANISATION STAND FOR?

The NIHSS is part of South Africa's development plan as set out in the National Development Plan: A Vision for 2030 (the NDP). The NDP categorically states that without attention to higher education, inadequate human capacity will constrain the knowledge production and innovation needed to change from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. The NDP informs a deliberate focus on research and development to fortify the

calibre of teaching and shift the quality of higher education offered to all South Africans.

What the NIHSS does and the outcomes it delivers are directly geared to effect such change as is described in the NDP – but specifically in the humanities and social sciences.

How the organisation carries out its mandate is guided by a set of shared principles. These are:



3. WHY IS THE INSTITUTE RELEVANT TO PEOPLE LIKE ME?

More than ever, South Africa needs agile and well-rounded thinkers who can assess and adapt to change, analyse trends, produce new paradigms, and consider the past to better prepare for the future.

Today South Africa is faced with many challenges, some of which will take decades to address in any comprehensive way. The young people of our country need to be equipped with the tools to face these challenges and bring about change. Knowledge is the ultimate tool and means.

But education and training should not only provide the knowledge and skills required by the economy; it should also contribute to developing thinking citizens, able to function effectively, creatively and ethically as part of a democratic society. Such

citizens should have an understanding of their society, and be able to participate fully in its political, social and cultural life.

In the more than two decades since South Africa discarded the apartheid regime and replaced it with a democratically elected government, much has been achieved. Much remains to be done, however, to rid our country of the injustices of its colonial and apartheid past. Deep-seated inequalities are rooted in our past, and for too long we have used ideas and tools not suited to our conditions. We need new ways of thinking, and alternative paradigms, perspectives and frameworks to construct an own body of Africa-centred knowledge that values all human beings. This new way of thinking and theorising about humans – who we are and where we have come from – should inform our tertiary education.

To this end, education and research in the humanities and social sciences must unlock possibilities for South Africans to find new ways to think, create and relate, with a deeper understanding of our complex socio-economic problems.

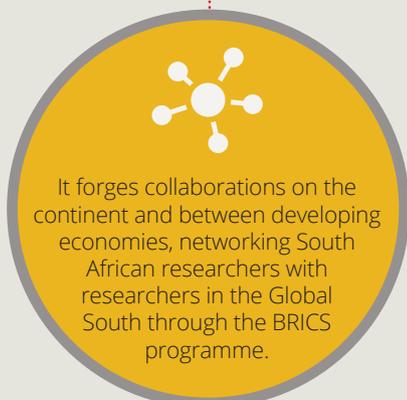
Outcomes from the humanities and social sciences impact the calibre of the society in existence, the quality of solutions humans generate in how we socially relate, and the effectiveness of the government, business and civil society sectors.

A thriving humanities and social sciences will ensure that the continent produces both the human resources and the innovative ideas needed to spur the creation of livelihoods and jobs, increase equality and alleviate poverty. Our ability to educate and empower talented individuals and stimulate university and other research is a key driver in our quest for social development. That is why each one of us should care!



4. HOW DOES THE NIHSS CREATE VALUE?

The NIHSS creates value in three main ways:



4.1 The NIHSS as an enabler of PhD scholarship

One of the objectives set out in the NDP is to increase the percentage of PhD-qualified scholars in the higher education section.

The NIHSS collaborates with the South African Humanities Deans' Association (SAHUDA) to extend 150 scholarships per year to full-time PhD students based at South African universities.

The main objective of this programme is to promote scholarship and address inequities in the humanities and social sciences. To ensure that successful applicants are provided with structured intellectual and mentorship support, the NIHSS–SAHUDA cooperation has created an ambitious national doctoral programme for the humanities and social sciences. The NIHSS Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 sets a target of 900 South African students participating in Doctoral Schools by 2020.

The NIHSS Doctoral Schools and Scholarships Programme thus serves to advance postgraduate scholarship through a range of innovations, including:

- Providing scholarships for postgraduate students studying in the humanities and social sciences;
- Strengthening a student-centred culture in the higher education system and helping to create an environment where the critical, analytical and normative capacities of students are enhanced;
- Ensuring collaborative supervision of doctoral students by two or more universities, which could include South African universities collaborating with universities outside the borders of South Africa; and
- Addressing inequities regarding the demographic composition of PhD holders.

4.1.2 The NIHSS National Mentorship Programme (NMP)

The NIHSS National Mentorship Programme is a first, and serves as a best practice in academic circles.

The NMP is constituted from a partnership between the NIHSS, SAHUDA and CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa). The programme aims to provide high-quality academic mentoring to all NIHSS doctoral students through targeted interventions offering a communal-based approach to doctoral support. Mentors are broadly tasked with coordinating Doctoral Schools and providing mentorship and development to NIHSS-funded students. Mentors also play a critical role in facilitating the development of relevant research skills and encouraging cross-institutional and inter-disciplinary conversations among doctoral students. These mentors' contributions play a significant role in providing enhanced doctoral study support within an increasingly strained postgraduate system.

The NMP is a key component of the Doctoral Schools and Scholarships Programme. The NIHSS runs six virtual Doctoral Schools, which are organised along regional lines: Eastern Cape; KwaZulu-Natal; Northern Corridor; Free State and UNISA; Western Cape; and Gauteng. Each region has several universities, which must collaborate to support the NIHSS doctoral candidates. Mentors are allocated the task of organising regional capacity-building initiatives to support candidates based in specific regions. These mentors are crucial to the smooth running of the NMP. The NIHSS has 23 mentors based at different universities across South Africa.

4.1.3 The African Pathways Programme

The NIHSS serves to advance Pan-African postgraduate scholarship through a variety of innovations. The African Pathways Scholarship is one such innovation, which serves to:

Include collaborative supervision of doctoral students by two or more African universities; and

Provide a platform for African scholars to cooperate and collaborate to reflect on the past, present and future of the continent.

The African Pathways Programme is an expansion of the Continental and Global South scope of the NIHSS. The aim is primarily to develop an Africa-centred programme and, further, to facilitate research and teaching, including national curriculum innovation. The African Pathways Programme facilitates African research and teaching networks through annual mobility grants, which provide support to South African researchers and postgraduate students to access opportunities that enhance targeted HSS scholarship and collaborations within the African continent.

In the interests of increasing the footprint of its South African programme on the continent, the NIHSS collaborates with CODESRIA to extend 37 scholarships per year to full-time non-South African PhD students based at South African universities. This programme requires engagement with various governments and their education ministries, and other African institutions of higher education.

The uptake and momentum of the African Pathways Programme both confirms the need for the programme and promises its success.

4.1.4 Mobility grants

Mobility grants provide funding support for South African researchers and postgraduate students wanting to visit non-South African universities across the African continent to pursue collaboration with scholars there – whether it be in joint teaching collaborations, new curriculum development, short course attendance, or participation in research networks. The beneficiaries of mobility grants include NIHSS-funded project leaders, postgraduate students registered for either a Masters or PhD/Doctoral study at a public university in South Africa, or non-South African scholars from elsewhere on the African continent invited by a South African scholar. Mobility grants cover a period of between one and three months.



4.2 The NIHSS as a catalyst for change in research

The second profound way in which the NIHSS creates value is by dynamising the fields of research and teaching in the HSS through a range of Catalytic Research Projects and Humanities Hubs. The NIHSS will establish Catalytic Research Projects and Humanities Hubs by 2020.

4.2.1 Catalytic Research Projects

The main objective of the Institute's Catalytic Research Projects (CRP) programme is to provide services to the higher education sphere within the humanities and social sciences. This includes, but is not limited to, advancing learning within the Institute's scope and application by ensuring collaboration and coordination with the work of higher education.

The CRP programme is based on the concept of collaborative research programmes founded on an existing knowledge base and expertise. The cornerstone of any Catalytic Research Project is that research project leaders demonstrate collaboration with national and international researchers (experts) in their area of research.

Projects funded under the CRP engage in research in areas that are largely unexplored, such as pre-1652 historiography, sources of creativity, popular education, post-conflict and reconstruction, indigenous languages, the humanities conceptualisation, lineages of knowledge production in the HSS, hidden voices, and socio-economic alternatives. CRP research must identify the gaps that are located at the heart of the struggles around contested spaces of heritage, history, languages and culture.

The aim of the NIHSS CRP is therefore to:

- Invite proposals from researchers to conduct coherent, collaborative research programmes that involve a network of researchers in humanities and social sciences study areas that have been approved;

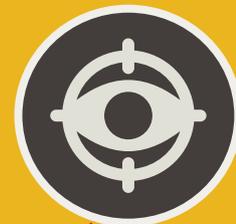
- Fund projects and provide resources to encourage the recognition and advancement of the role and contribution of the humanities and social sciences;
- Encourage transformative relevance by demonstrating significant transformation in the humanities and social sciences, by applying the principle that any CRP research must open new areas of research in the humanities and social sciences, which will have a multiplier effect on future research projects and which holds serious transformative implications for the curriculum in the HSS;
- Encourage the use of networks and resources to dynamise fields of scholarship that are under-researched and are of importance to nation-building and knowledge production; and
- Build capacity by offering training and funding opportunities to postgraduate students (Honours and Masters levels).

Specifically, Catalytic Research Projects:

→ ...Mirror priorities in the bigger plan for the revitalisation of HSS research; and

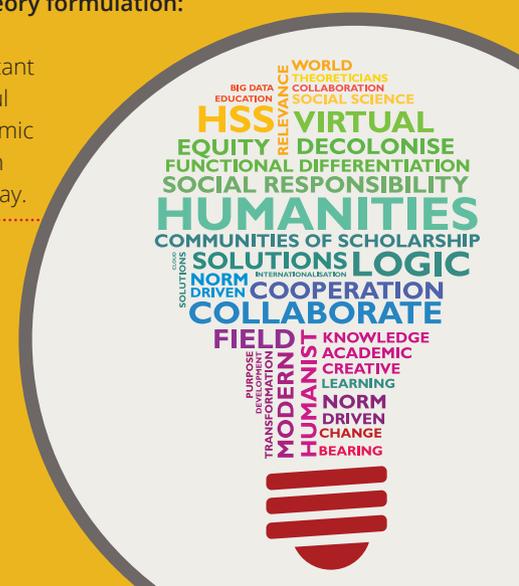


→ ...Are targeted interventions with the objective of intervening deliberately to restructure research patterns, challenge dominant social assumptions that influence social, political and economic institutions, and produce new HSS knowledge.



It is not only a matter of injecting funding and resources into scholarship; it is also important to shift debates and ideas towards alternative paradigms and new theory formulation:

→ ...Demonstrate significant potential for a meaningful response to socio-economic problems that face South Africa and its citizens today.



Catalytic Research Projects include elements of community outreach, allowing academics to play a role as public intellectuals:



→...Advance a broad cross-section of research in uncharted territory.

Digital humanities serve as an example of such a new research area:



→...Have direct implications for curriculum development and transformation in training; and



→...Connect to other strategic priorities within the public, non-profit, and private sectors, thereby creating a broad base of stakeholders and support to promote successful implementation.

4.2.2 Working Groups

Further to the Catalytic Research Projects, the Working Groups for Academic Collaboration programme involves collectives of researchers whose cooperation is geared towards specified objectives. These collectives can be interdisciplinary and domain-specific groups that focus on specific areas of research, teaching and learning in the HSS field. Working Groups projects can also focus their activities on establishing networks, fostering dialogue, and accelerating the production of research outputs.

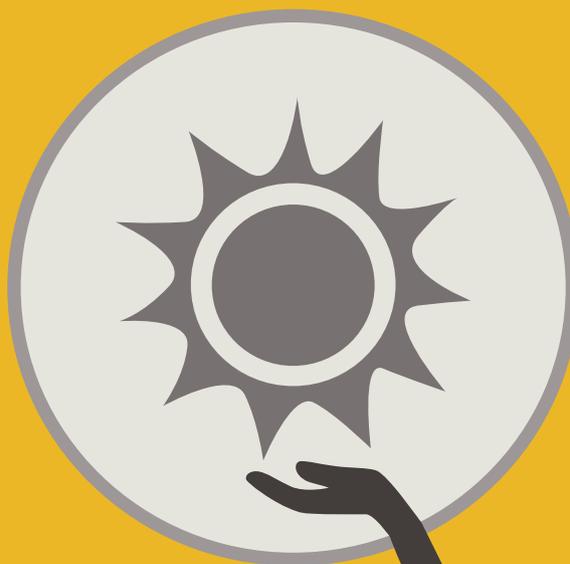
The Working Groups programme is intended to give effect to the recommendations in the Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences on the HSS entity that will fundamentally change the existing higher education landscape to make it more responsive to, and inclusive of, the HSS and its disciplinary particularities. These Working Groups are also aimed at ensuring the integrity and excellence of the HSS in South African higher education institutions.

The collaboration with academic or university-based publishers – such as Wits University Press, UKZN Press and the HSRC Press – has been successful and several HSS books have been published through this initiative.

4.2.3 Professional Associations

Professional Associations have been supported to further enhance the HSS, especially in matters related to curriculum reform. The NIHSS extends support to professional associations in the HSS. This is to ensure that the higher education landscape is more responsive to and inclusive of HSS and its disciplinary particularities. Professional associations are awarded funding toward the following activities:

- Conferences/annual general meetings;
- Workshops and seminars;
- Publication of academic journals and special editions;
- International collaborations; and
- Student conference attendance and participation.



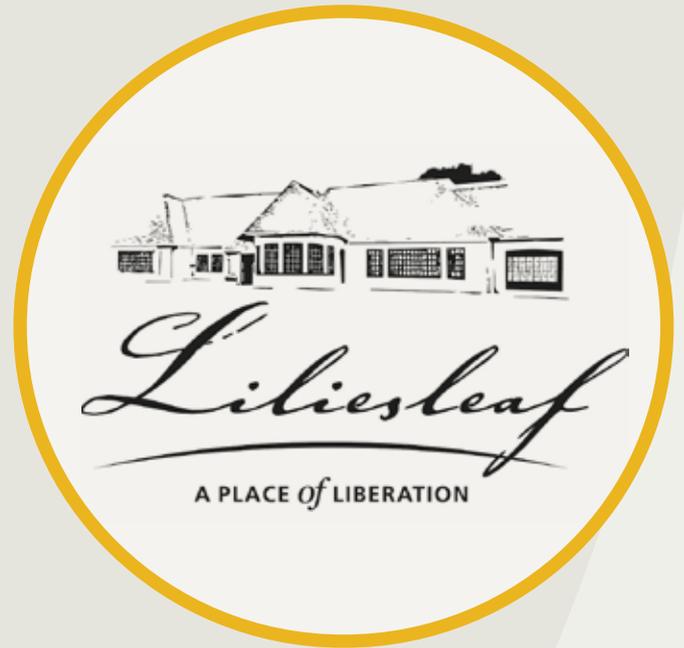
Professional associations that received support from the NIHSS to date include:

- Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI)
- Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA)
- Society of South African Geographers (SAAG)
- South African Sociological Association (SASA)
- Philosophical Society of Southern Africa (PSSA)
- African Association for Rhetoric
- Education Association of South Africa
- English Academy of Southern Africa
- International Society for Gesture Studies
- Linguistics Society of Southern Africa
- South African Association of Political Studies
- South African Education Research Association
- South African Society for Research in Music

4.2.4 Humanities Hubs

Humanities Hubs are centres of knowledge with a focus on heritage. They offer ways to use existing resources to engage communities in creating or reproducing new ways of knowing. Humanities Hubs is primarily a research-based programme; it aims to catalyse and open new avenues for scholarship in the humanities and social sciences and to assist in and promote the HSS more generally, linking with the broader public, outside of universities.

Liliesleaf is the Institute's flagship Humanities Hub, funding having been awarded to the Liliesleaf Trust in March 2015 to establish a pilot programme. The hub's theme is "Memory and History"; it is envisaged that by remembering and making sense of the past, we come to terms with our present and can imagine



and construct our future. The Liliesleaf Hub has two main objectives: firstly, to develop an outreach programme aiming to address the issue of memory, the struggle against forgetting and the need to preserve and protect the memory of South Africa's liberation struggle and hence, ultimately, her history; and secondly, highlighting why the humanities are essential and critical disciplines to study.

The Liliesleaf Hub has attracted thousands of local and international visitors eager to understand and engage with a seminal period in South Africa's liberation struggle. Recognised as one of South Africa's leading heritage sites, Liliesleaf pays tribute and is a testament to the many lives that changed the political landscape of this country. The project has worked with a team of researchers, curriculum developers, historians and creatives to evolve as a dynamic platform for engagement.

Humanities Hubs like Liliesleaf are intended not to be static, but alive and constantly evolving – offering possibilities for innovative learning and inclusivity in knowledge generation. They demonstrate that knowledge production happens not only within the walls of universities as physical places of learning, but also "out there", where communities live and engage.

3 Liliesleaf has three components:



A Colloquium, which aims to assess and analyse 24 years of democracy and its meaning and relevance to today;



An Educational Outreach Programme; and



A Mobile Exhibition (the History and Memory Travelling Exhibition), which visits universities.

The exhibitions and activities that form the Liliesleaf Hub provide opportunities for conversation, reflection and engaging with the past, but also for looking forward, for critical reflection, and for imagination and creative responses to our history. The components of the project tell the story of the liberation struggle in a fresh and appealing way. The intention was to prompt people to look at the past with new eyes, to find creative ways of interpreting our present social and political environments. Liliesleaf visitors are inspired to discard reactive, obstructionist ways of expressing dissatisfaction and dissent, and find a new way forward – one bolstered by critical engagement and democratic discourse. To date other hubs have been identified, including the Wits Origins Humanities Hub, Hunterstoun Centre Humanities Hub and the Laboratory of Kinetic Objects.

To date other hubs have been identified, including:

- **Freedom and Humanity Hub** (*Freedom Park, Gauteng*);
- **Migrant Workers' Hub** (*Lwandle Museum, Western Cape*);
- **Theatre Humanities Hub** (*Market Theatre Foundation, Gauteng*);
- **Ex-Political Prisoners Project** (*Robben Island Museum, Western Cape*);
- **African Languages Literary Heritage Hub** (*Rhodes University, Eastern Cape*);
- **Factory of Art Humanities Hub** (*University of the Western Cape*);
- **Origins Hub** (*Wits Origins Centre, Gauteng*);
- **Land and Intellectual Heritage Hub** (*Hunterstoun Centre, University of Fort Hare, Eastern Cape*);
- **Community-based Memory Hub** (*University of Fort Hare, Liberation Struggle History Archives, Eastern Cape*);
- **Ecosystems and Indigenous Knowledge Hub** (*iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, KwaZulu-Natal*);
- **Mapungubwe Cultural Hub** (*Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site, Limpopo*);



4.3 The NIHSS as convener of Global South collaboration and advisor on policy

The third way in which the NIHSS creates value is by hosting the South African BRICS Think Tank (SABTT), and representing South Africa on the BRICS Think Tank Council (BTTC), a structure that coordinates intellectual developmental issues for member states including development policies and plans.

In assuming the role of South African BRICS Think Tank custodian, the NIHSS convenes opportunities for research cooperation among BRICS partners in the Global South. The Institute also advances proactive engagement of policy makers and non-state actors in dialogue and discussion on BRICS-related matters, thereby playing its part in advising government and civil society on development.

Key activities in realising the full value of the South African BRICS Think Tank (SABTT) are international research collaborations, seminars, workshops and conferences and, ultimately, the research outputs delivered, and the conversion of these into policy advice.

5. WHEN AND WHERE DO I SEE THE NIHSS IN ACTION?

The NIHSS vision is to become the epicentre of scholarship, pedagogy, community practice and social responsibility for the humanities and social sciences, not only in South Africa but also in Africa.

Our stakeholders are invited to join us in becoming part of the point of origin, or epicentre, of this tremor shaking up the humanities and social sciences.

Support us in any of the following ways:

→ If you are a child of the beautiful, young and vibrant democratic South Africa...

Value every human life equally, encourage ordinary South Africans to grapple with the deeper questions of who we are, where we come from and how we relate and, above all, protect the privilege we have to shed new light and create a different body of knowledge that's true to our unique and diverse context. If this sounds too abstract (and it may very well): just appreciate our heritage, join us at Liliesleaf – and new Humanities Hubs that may emerge – and be supportive of family and friends who want to study in the HSS field.

→ If you are a scholar in the HSS...

Use any of the NIHSS-facilitated or other emerging opportunities to collaborate with fellow scholars – be it a Working Group, mobility grant or Catalytic Research Project. Become part of the solution: a new generation of researchers working across disciplinary, university and/or country boundaries to catalyse and break open paradigms for new HSS theory formation on the African continent.

→ If you are a student considering a PhD in an HSS-related discipline...

Make use of the value offered by government by means of the NIHSS funding (e.g. scholarships and mobility grants), and other support (e.g. the National Mentorship Programme). But more than that: do your part in promoting the HSS among your fellow

students. Become an activist for the importance of the humanities and social sciences as vital organs in our shared body of knowledge as a society.

→ If you are a professional organisation in the HSS or higher education...

View the existence of the NIHSS as a call to professional organisations to collaborate across boundaries for the greater good of a revitalised humanities and social sciences and improved South–South value creation. Tap into the NIHSS virtual collaboration model to advance research, teaching, information-sharing, learning and innovation in the humanities and social sciences.

→ If you are a leader in government or business...

Consider the truth that neither government nor business can succeed in a society that fails. Make use of the NIHSS as convener to put together public–private partnerships that can restart the HSS engine as driver of solutions for socio-economic development on the continent.

→ If you are an emeritus professor...

We need your wisdom and skill. Support the fast-tracking of our PhD across the continent. Get involved in the National Mentorship Programme and share your very valuable experience and expertise with the upcoming generation of scholars.

→ If you are an NIHSS employee...

Be inspired to be the change we all want to see, be true to the Institute's key principles and live the NIHSS values with great humility as a servant for the public good.

Regularly visit our website (www.nihss.ac.za) to see our calls for applications, and related activities in the broad range of our academic programmes.



2014-2018 HIGHLIGHTS



01

The NIHSS is government's response to the dire consequences that a weak humanities and social sciences (HSS) fraternity will have on socio-economic development in South Africa.

- The magnitude of these challenges is well articulated in the 2011 Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences – serving as the Institute's anchor document.
- The DHET legally established the NIHSS in December 2013 within the framework of the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training as approved by Cabinet.
- On a strategic level, the NIHSS directly aligns with the National Development Plan as it directs the role of higher education in providing South Africa with adequate human capacity for the knowledge production and innovation needed to transform from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy.

The NIHSS has the sole purpose and single mandate of building South Africa's HSS capacity by reviving research and postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences. That is the core of the organisation's existence.

- Assuming responsibility for all BRICS Think Thank-related activities on behalf of South Africa is not a new or different mandate, but merely an additional responsibility that opens up further avenues for creating value through South-South collaborations and policy advice.

02

03

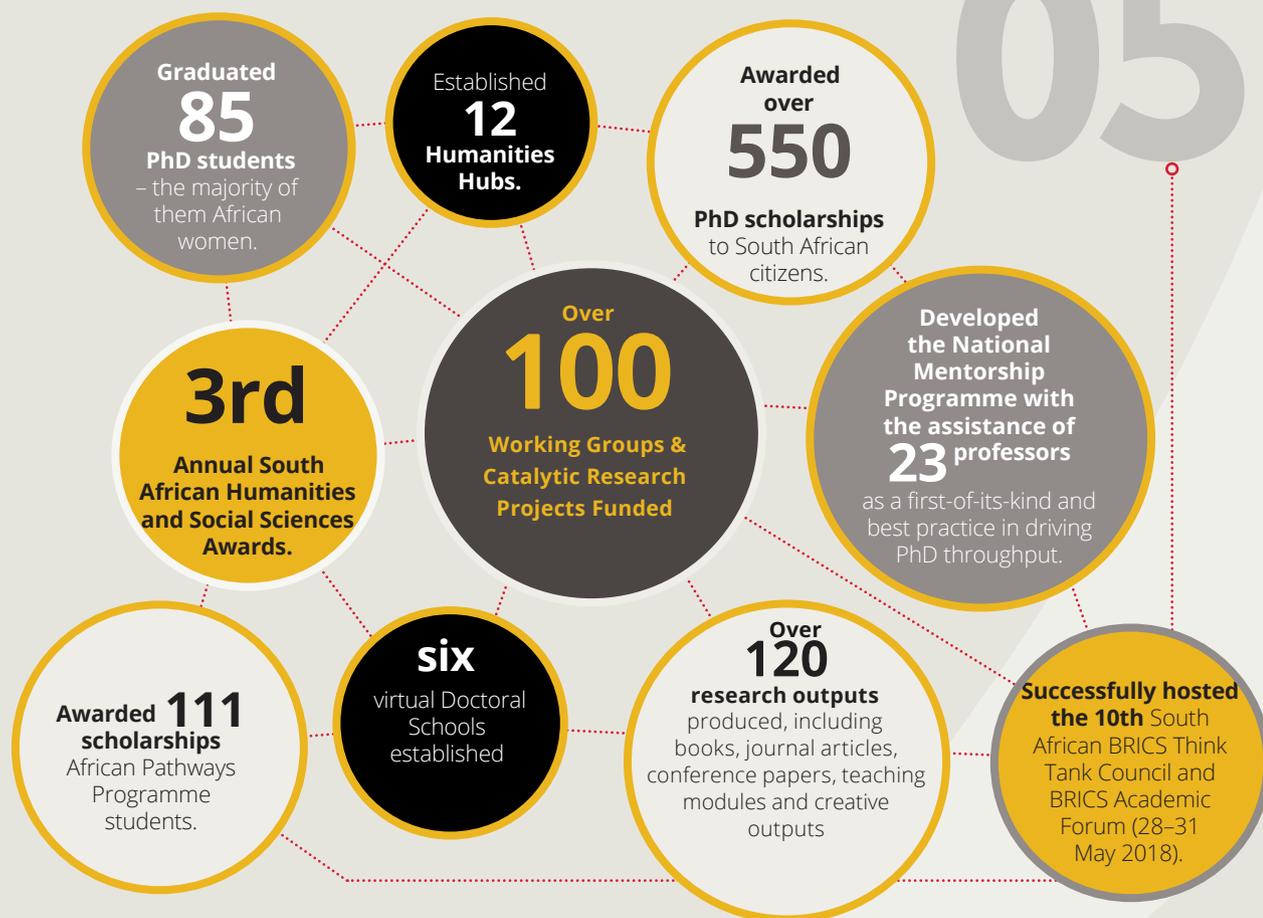
The vision of the Institute is to become the epicentre of scholarship, pedagogy, community practice and social responsibility for the humanities and social sciences, not only in South Africa but also in Africa. Achieving this vision means significant acceleration of the development of a new generation of scholars, with emphasis on throughput and on releasing new energy and momentum in HSS knowledge creation.

04

The NIHSS is a values-based organisation governed by five guiding principles: cooperation and the establishment of communities of scholarship, norm-driven internationalisation, social responsibility and equity, functional differentiation as opposed to resource differentiation, and transformative relevance. In disclosing how it adds value, the NIHSS assures its stakeholders and the citizens of South Africa that all strategies, decisions, programmes and projects adhere to these principles.

- Underlying the conduct of employees in the organisation are the values of teamwork, excellence, integrity, creativity and respect.

05



06

Stakeholder engagement is the core business process enabling the NIHSS to create value. It is through unrelenting efforts to engage stakeholders that are material to its mission and mandate that the NIHSS plays its part as catalyst, enabler, convener, and advisor on policy. As such the NIHSS seeks to involve further and new implementation partners and will always be inclusive and transparent in its dealings.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR THE HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Email: info@nihss.ac.za
Tel: +27 11 480 2300
Fax: +27 11 482 3068

2nd floor, 24 St Andrews
Johannesburg, Parktown
Gauteng
2193

Postnet Suite 413
P/Bag X30500
Houghton
2041

www.nihss.ac.za