



Mr Lebogang Seale, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

## TURNING OPINIONS INTO IMPACT: NUTRITION SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA (NSSA) COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTEND OP-ED WRITING WORKSHOP

The Nutrition Society of South Africa (NSSA) Council members recently had the opportunity to attend an insightful workshop titled “*Writing Impactful Op-Ed Pieces*” on 24 April 2026. “Op-Ed” stands for “Opposite the Editorial Page.” The term originated in newspapers, where opinion articles written by guest contributors were traditionally placed opposite the newspaper’s editorial page. Today, an Op-Ed refers more broadly to a written opinion piece that presents the author’s perspective on a topic, issue, or current event.

The session was presented by Mr Lebogang Seale, a multi-award-winning journalist, author, and communications specialist currently attached to the Strategic Communications division at the University of Johannesburg.

With more than a decade of experience in mainstream media, Mr Seale has held several senior editorial positions at Independent Newspapers, including editor of the *Sunday Independent*. He is also a part-time lecturer in journalism and media studies and a PhD candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand. His latest book, *One Hundred Years of Dispossession: My Family’s Quest to Reclaim Our Land* (2024), has received national recognition and contributed significantly to conversations on land reform in South Africa.

During the workshop, Mr Seale shared valuable guidance on how professionals can use Op-Ed writing to influence thinking, stimulate discussion, and engage wider audiences. According to him, an Op-Ed piece is far more than simply sharing a viewpoint, it is an opportunity to encourage readers to see an issue from a fresh perspective. Whether published in newspapers, newsletters, magazines, or online platforms, Op-Ed articles combine facts, experience, and personal insight to create compelling narratives that resonate with readers.

The workshop highlighted the distinction between academic writing and Op-Ed writing. While academic writing often focuses on neutrality and evidence, Op-Ed pieces allow writers to take a clear stance. However, Mr Seale emphasised that impactful Op-Ed articles should still be grounded

in credible information, thoughtful reflection, and a well-structured argument. The goal is not only to express an opinion, but also to persuade readers through logic, relevance, and storytelling.

Council members also learned the importance of crafting a strong introduction. Mr Seale explained that the opening line of an opinion piece is critical, as it serves as the “hook” that captures the reader’s attention. This could be a striking claim, surprising fact, metaphor, mystery, or counter-intuitive observation that encourages readers to continue reading. The introduction should also establish the foundation for the argument being presented.

In addition, the workshop explored how engaging narratives and real-life experiences can make Op-Ed pieces more relatable and impactful. The importance of clarity, balance, and respectful engagement with differing perspectives was strongly emphasised throughout the session.

One of the key take-home messages from the workshop was that effective Op-Ed pieces start conversations. In today’s fast-moving world, Op-Ed writing plays an important role in shaping public dialogue and encouraging meaningful engagement on important issues within nutrition and health.

Mr Seale also shared a practical checklist for revising an Op-Ed before submission for publication:

- Check clarity
- Check coherence
- Check simplicity
- Check voice and tone
- Verify quotations and paraphrasing for accuracy
- Ensure all sources are properly credited
- Maintain consistency in your argument throughout the article

A special thank you to Mr Seale for sharing his expertise and inspiring attendees to use their voices more confidently and effectively in professional and public spaces.

One of the NSSA’s goals for this year is to strengthen our media presence, and we hope to see opinion pieces from council members published in the coming months.

*By H Kesa*  
NSSA Council Member