

Moseki and Siane Appointed to ICAB Leadership Group



Ernest Moseki

Dichaba Siane

BHP Community & Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator Ernest Moseki and BHP Community Advisory Board (CAB) Chairperson Dichaba Siane have been elected to prominent positions within the IMPAACT Community Leadership Group (ILG). Moseki will serve as Vice Chair, while Siane joins as a member. Their terms will commence on December 2, 2024.

The ICAB Leadership Group plays a crucial role in guiding the ILG and representing its interests in IMPAACT's broader leadership structure, including various Scientific Committees. Moseki emphasized the importance of this role, noting, "It is a position of responsibility and requires commitment in terms of time and other resources. It is an opportunity to network, learn, and acquire new skills."

Moseki, who is also involved in several other committees such as the IMPAACT Cure Research Committee, the HPTN Ethics Working Group, and the Ministry of Health PrEP Technical Working Group, expressed gratitude for the opportunity. "I am honored to be elected as Vice Chair and look forward to contributing to the ILG's objectives," he said.

Siane, who has been a pivotal figure in the CAB since 2008, will continue his advocacy work as a member of the ILG. In addition to his new role, Siane serves on the TB Scientific Committee and the Protocol Team for IMPAACT studies. Reflecting on his journey, Siane noted, "Joining CAB was a response to the significant challenges faced by individuals living with HIV. My work with CAB has led to substantial improvements in health care in Botswana, including

the reduction of HIV transmission rates from mother to child."

Siane highlighted the CAB's achievements in combating stigma and improving HIV/AIDS advocacy in Botswana, but also pointed out ongoing challenges. "Despite our progress, there are still areas needing attention, such as providing CAB members with adequate resources, especially for international engagements," he added.

Both Moseki and Siane's appointments underscore their significant contributions to global health and their continued commitment to advancing community and scientific leadership.

Foreword: Exciting Changes for Our Newsletter

Dear Team,

We are thrilled to announce a fresh new chapter for our newsletter! After a collaborative and engaging consultative process, we have decided to rename our beloved BHP Quarterly Newsletter to **“The BHP Insider.”** This new name emerged as the staff favourite following a public vote. We believe this new title reflects the dynamic and engaging content we aim to deliver, providing you with deeper insights into our organization and its activities.

While we embrace this exciting change, we want to assure you that The BHP Insider will retain the familiar template and design that you know and love. Maintaining the newsletter’s current look and feel means you can expect the same high-quality layout and presentation. We will continue to review the publication to see if there will be a need for a new fresh design.

In addition to the name change, we are also introducing a new publication frequency. Starting with this edition, The BHP Insider will shift from a quarterly to a monthly release schedule. We will be implementing this change on a trial basis over the next three months to evaluate its feasibility and impact. Our goal is to keep you even better informed and connected with more regular updates.

We hope you are as excited as we are about these updates and look forward to continuing to provide you with valuable content through The BHP Insider.

Best Regards,

Tapela Alex Morapedi
Communications Coordinator



King's College London and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation visits BHP



Motheo Study Team pose for a picture the delegation from King's College London and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

King's College London and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently visited the Botswana Harvard AIDS Institute Partnership (BHP) on June 14-15, 2024. The visit aimed to observe the usage and impact of a Hyperfine Swoop low-field Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine donated by King's College London, with financial support from the Gates Foundation.

This MRI machine, produced by Hyperfine, was donated to BHP as part of an ongoing global initiative to enhance neuroimaging capabilities for pediatric neurodevelopment research, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

The machine is currently being utilised by the BHP MRI study, which is a part of the larger Motheo Study examining neurodevelopmental and social-emotional outcomes among children exposed in utero to either dolutegravir or efavirenz based ART. The MRI component of the study involves an MRI procedure to examine early childhood brain development as well as to assess the feasibility and acceptability of paediatric low-field MRI

research in Botswana.

During the visit, the team trained Motheo Study team on the operation of the MRI machine. They also conducted an upgrade of the equipment to ensure it continues to provide high-quality imaging for critical research. The delegation was welcomed by BHP management, with the deputy Chief Executive Officer, Dr Gaerolwe Masheto briefing the visitors on BHP's mandate. He highlighted ongoing world-class research projects being conducted at BHP, particularly emphasising on clinical trials with a focus on children.

The eight-member visiting delegation was made up of Carly Ann Bernalick, Niall Bourke and Steven Charles Rees Willas from King's College London; Gayatri Nurindrayani Helsby and Sean Deoni from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Heid Robin Frail and John Lawrence Rogers from Hyperfine; Rosa Cano Lorente from Brown University; Sharada Balaji and Shannon Kolind from University of British Columbia as well as Jacqueline Nathalie Kristina de Navarro from Collective Minds Radiology.

Rising Stars in Science: Phinius and Choga Win Prestigious Fellowships

Two emerging young leaders in science at Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP), Bonolo Phinius and Wonderful Choga, have been awarded highly sought-after fellowship awards that promise to elevate their research and professional development.

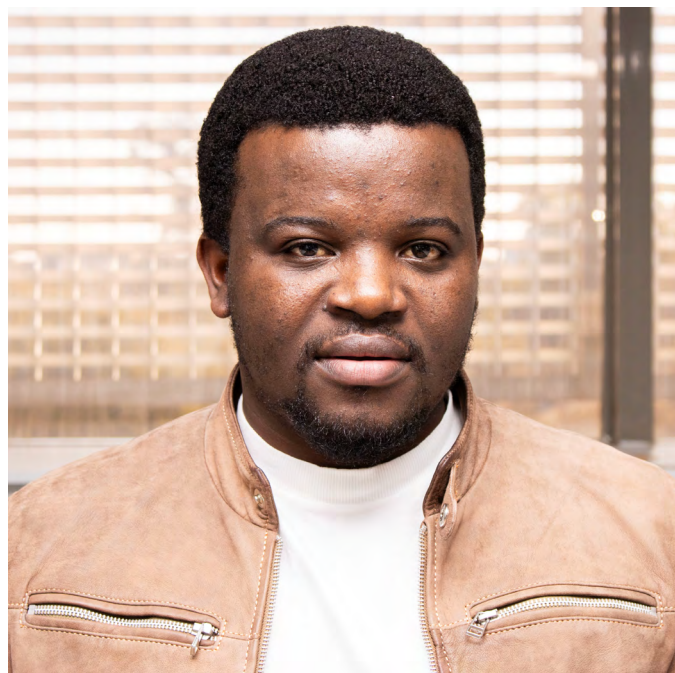
Bonolo Phinius, a PhD Fellow with TESA, has been selected for the acclaimed “Young Female Scientist Programme in Japan.” This competitive fellowship, supported by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in partnership with Okayama University, will allow Phinius to conduct collaborative research at the university in Japan. The program is dedicated to advancing the careers of young women scientists by providing them with opportunities to engage in innovative research and gain valuable international experience.



Bonolo Phinius

In a parallel achievement, Wonderful Choga, a BHP Bioinformatician and SANTHE PhD Fellow, has been awarded the Computational Biology Mentored Fellowship. This prestigious award, worth \$40,000 for one year, is granted jointly by SANTHE, the Ragon Institute, Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis,

and Université catholique de Louvain. The fellowship includes a year of intensive training and mentorship aimed at developing advanced bioinformatics skills. Choga’s research, focusing on “SARS-CoV-2 Evolution in Botswana,” will be guided by Dr. Scott Handley at Washington University.



Wonderful Choga

Phinius and Choga’s accolades highlight the growing support for young scientists and their contributions to advancing scientific knowledge. Their fellowships are expected to significantly impact their fields and foster further innovation.

MSD Visits BHP for Study Site Validation

A delegation of two people, Elandre Kok and Suzan Jean Vaz from Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD), a global pharmaceutical company, visited the Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP) on June 18, 2024, to validate the site for a groundbreaking human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine study. The study aims to assess the efficacy and safety of a single dose of Gardasil 9 compared to the currently approved three-dose regimen.

Presenting the overview of the study, Elandre Kok noted that Gardasil 9 is designed to protect against different HPV types, which are responsible for HPV-related cancers and diseases. "The current standard regimen requires three doses, which can be challenging for patients to complete due to logistical and financial barriers. A single-dose regimen could revolutionize HPV prevention by simplifying the vaccination process and

potentially increasing coverage rates." He said. He said the study will involve both heterosexual men and women, including men who have sex with men (MSM). This inclusive approach ensures comprehensive data on the vaccine's efficacy and safety across different demographics.

The validation visit by Merck representatives involved a presentation of the study overview and processes, a review of the site's facilities and capabilities to ensure they meet the high standards required for the study.

The results of this HPV vaccine study is expected to provide crucial insights that could inform global vaccination policies. This initiative underscores the importance of international collaboration in addressing public health challenges and improving health outcomes for diverse populations.



Source: <https://www.europeanpharmaceuticalreview.com/news/186671/msd-irelands-e1b-facility-investment-achieves-new-milestone/>

BHP Engages in MCKT Knowledge and Technology Sector Pitso



BHP's Natasha Moraka, Professor Koofhethile and Tapela Morapedi at the MCKT Knowledge and Technology Pitso

The Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP) participated in the Knowledge and Technology Sector Pitso, hosted by the Ministry of Communications, Knowledge, and Technology (MCKT) from July 31 to August 1, 2024. The event, held at the Tlotlo Hotel and Conference Centre, served as a consultative forum for dialogue, introspection, and strategic planning among government officials and various stakeholders.

The Pitso aimed to foster discussions on research and innovation within the Ministry's mandate. It featured updates on policy implementations, expert presentations from diverse fields of knowledge and technology, and group discussions focusing on thematic areas. These discussions sought to address and identify long-term strategies for tackling emerging national policy decisions and developmental targets.

Expert presentations covered different thematic areas which included Intellectual Property, Technology

Transfer, Knowledge Beneficiation, Indigenous Knowledge Mainstreaming, Safe Use of Nuclear Energy, and Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies.

Key outcomes of the Pitso included a set of recommendations designed to overcome identified challenges and barriers to implementation and growth. The event provided a platform for stakeholders to offer insights and solutions for advancing Botswana's research and technology sectors.

BHP was represented by a team comprising of the Principal Investigator for the Phodiso Study, Prof. Catherine Koofhethile; Research Associate, Dr. Simani Gaseitsiwe; SANTHE PhD Fellow, Natasha Moraka; and Communications Coordinator, Tapela Morapedi. They contributed to breakaway group discussions on topics such as Research Funding, Policy and Regulatory Frameworks.

IAS 2024 Abstracts/ Presentations

1. High Prevalence of Hepatitis B Virus Drug Resistance Mutations to Lamivudine Among People with HIV/ HBV Coinfection in Rural and Peri-Urban Communities in Botswana. Bonolo Phinius. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
2. Exclusive Breastfeeding and Associated Factors for Mothers Living with and without HIV in Botswana. Roxanna Haghghat, Gosego Masasa, Samuel W. Kgole, Sara R. Schenkel, Martha Ngwaca, Boitshepo Phale, Gaontebale Elija, Pearl Maano, Olebogeng Selepe, Kenanabo Setlhabi, Christina Psaros, Elizabeth M. Waldron, Michelle A. Bulterys, Thuto Ralegoreng, Gaerolwe Masheto, Bornapate Nkomo, Joseph Makhema, Jennifer Jao, Kathleen M. Powis. Poster Presentation at the 25th International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
3. Improved growth during bNAb-only treatment among early-treated suppressed children with HIV. Jaspreet Banga, Bryan S. Nelson, Gbolahan Ajibola, Maureen Sakoi-Mosetlhi, Oganne Batlang, Kenneth Maswabi, Obonwe Dinah Pule, Molly Pretorius-Holme, Michael D. Hughes, Shahin Lockman, Daniel R. Kuritzkes, Mathias Litcherfeld, Joseph Makhema, Roger L. Shapiro, Kathleen M. Powis. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
4. Whole genome sequencing based profiling of rifampicin resistant Mycobacterium tuberculosis strains by HIV status in Botswana. T. Mogashoa, J. Loubser, A. Dippenaar, S. Moyo, O.T. Bareng, K. Seru, B. Zuze, P. Motshosi, T. Molefi, T. Makhondo, O. Stephen, C. Modongo, D. Otukile, M.B. Mbulawa, S. Gaseitsiwe, R. Musonda, J. Makhema, R.M. Warren, E.M. Streicher. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
5. Pubertal onset in children with in utero HIV exposure in Botswana: Results of the FLOURISH study. J. Jao, C. Gochanour, P.L. Williams, S. Schenkel, S. Kgole, G. Masasa, B. Phale, M. Ngwaca, C. Kgathi, J. Makhema, T. Ralegoreng, G. Masheto, N. Shaw, L. Serghides, R. Shapiro, S. Lockman, K. Powis. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
6. Low prevalence of integrase strand transfer inhibitors resistance associated mutations in Botswana before the roll out of dolutegravir based first line antiretroviral therapy. Dorcas Maruapula, Doreen Ditshwanelo, Marea Neo Pema, Natasha O Moraka, Ontlametse T Bareng, Patrick T Mokgethi, Wonderful T Choga, Kaelo K Seatla, Catherine K Koofhethile, Boitumelo J L Zuze, Tendani Gaolathe, Molly Pretorius-Holme, Kebaneilwe Lebani, Joseph Makhema, Vlad Novitsky, Roger Shapiro, Shahin Lockman, Sikhulile Moyo, Simani Gaseitsiwe. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
7. High Resistance to Second Generation Non-Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors Among HIV-1 Treatment Naïve Individuals with Multi-Class Drug Resistance in Botswana. N.S. Ndlovu, O.T. Bareng, W.T. Choga, N. O. Moraka, D. Nkwe, V. Novitsky, S. Moyo, S. Gaseitsiwe. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
8. Advancing HIV Cure Research in Adolescents through Proviral Reservoir Assessment after Longstanding ART in Botswana. Koofhile KC. Oral presentation at the SANTHE Satellite Session Workshop at International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.
9. Adolescent Perspectives on Enrolling in Two HIV Clinical Research Vignettes During Pregnancy. H.C. Baron, A. Mussa, R. Rajeshmohan, A. Hagan-Bezgin, A. Thom, M. Bapabi, K. Ramontshonyana, P. Mmodzi, P. Winner, O. Tshume, M. Kasule, A. Bula, C. Morroni, A.D. Lyerly, S. Day. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.

10. Adolescent Perspectives on HIV Clinical Research Participation Rules During Pregnancy. H.C. Baron, A. Mussa, R. Rajeshmohan, A. Hagan-Bezgin^{2,5}, A. Thom⁶, M. Bapabi, K. Ramontshonyana, P. Mmodzi, P. Winner, O. Tshume, M. Kasule, A. Bula, C. Morroni, A.D. Lyerly, S. Day. Poster presentation at the International AIDS Conference (22 to 26 July 2024) in Munich, Germany.



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