

BHP Honours Dr Festus Mogae for Pioneering Leadership in Public Health



BHP CEO Dr Joseph Makhema (right) and Deputy CEO Dr Masheto (left) presenting a certificate of appreciation and a framed collage of Dr Mogae's pictures to Former First Lady Mrs Barbra Mogae.

The Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP) has paid tribute to former President Dr Festus Gontebanye Mogae for his extraordinary leadership and steadfast commitment to combating HIV/AIDS and addressing emerging public health challenges. The recognition highlights Dr Mogae's enduring legacy in advancing health equity and strengthening healthcare systems in Botswana, a testament to his vision for a healthier nation.

On November 28, 2024, ahead of World AIDS Day, Dr Joseph Makhema,

CEO of BHP, presented a certificate of appreciation and a framed collage featuring memorable moments of Dr Mogae's interactions with the BHP. The heartfelt honour was received on his behalf by his wife, former First Lady Mrs Barbara Mogae, at their residence in Phakalane Golf Estate, Gaborone.

"Dr Mogae's unwavering dedication to public health has left an indelible mark not just on Botswana, but on the global fight against HIV/AIDS," remarked Dr Makhema. "His bold decisions, including embracing

international partnerships and promoting innovative interventions, have been instrumental in reducing the burden of HIV and enhancing the overall health system in Botswana."

During his presidency from 1998 to 2008, Dr Mogae spearheaded groundbreaking initiatives that positioned Botswana as a global leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Former President championed the rollout of antiretroviral therapy (ART) in 2002, at a time when stigma and resource limitations posed significant challenges.

His leadership catalyzed partnerships with organizations such as Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Bill and Mellinda Gates Foundation and the Merck Foundation including BHP, enabling cutting-edge research and capacity-building efforts that continue to benefit the country.

The BHP, a collaborative effort between the Government of Botswana through the Ministry of Health and Harvard University represented by The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, has been at the forefront of public health research and training for over two decades. The partnership's research portfolio includes HIV prevention, treatment and cure, multiple other infectious diseases;

tuberculosis, hepatitis, Human Papilloma virus, non-communicable diseases and malignancies, and more recently, pathogenomics and surveillance of emerging diseases, testimony to the vision that Dr Mogae inspired during his tenure.

As Botswana continues to confront new public health challenges, the legacy of leaders like Dr Mogae serves as a guiding light. The token of appreciation, presented just days before World AIDS Day, underscores the importance of celebrating visionary leadership and partnerships in creating a healthier, more equitable future.

BHP Showcases Laboratory and HOPE-II Study at World AIDS Day Commemoration



Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe (left) visiting the BHP stall at the world AIDS Day Commemoration

On December 01, 2024 at World AIDS Day Commemoration, the Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP) highlighted the Botswana Harvard HIV Reference Laboratory (BHHRL)'s cutting-edge capabilities and introduced the HOPE-II Study, a groundbreaking research initiative aimed at determining the efficacy of a single-dose Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine among women living with HIV (WLWH). The study's immunological assays shall be undertaken at BHHRL which plays a pivotal role

in supporting BHP's clinical trials, training and capacity building initiatives and the broader national public health efforts.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and the National Health Laboratory (NHL), BHHRL also provides essential laboratory support for Botswana's National Antiretroviral (ARV) Program. BHHRL ensures comprehensive coverage for BHP clinical trials by offering a suite of services, including sample receipt

and processing, cell separation, diagnostics, safety monitoring, and specialized research assays. These services are critical for ensuring high-quality testing for participant enrollment and management across clinical studies.

Thanks to its adherence to Good Clinical Laboratory Practice (GCLP) guidelines, BHHRL is authorized to deliver laboratory services for clinical trials funded by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Division of AIDS (DAIDS). The lab supports global research networks such as ACTG, IMPAACT, HPTN, and CoVPN. Notably, this year, BHHRL became the first laboratory in the region to transition successfully from the ISO 15189:2012 standard to the newly updated ISO 15189:2022 standard under the Southern African Development Community Accreditation Service (SADCAS). This achievement underscores BHHRL's unwavering commitment to maintaining world-class quality and competence in medical laboratory services and research.

The HOPE-II Study, formally titled "Efficacy of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination to Prevent Infection Among Women Living with HIV: A Prospective, Individual, Double-Blind, Randomized Controlled Study", represents a significant step in HPV prevention research. The trial will evaluate the efficacy of a single-dose nonavalent HPV vaccine (targeting HPV types

16/18/31/33/45/52/58) among WLWH.

In addition to assessing vaccine efficacy, the HOPE-II Study will explore the prevalence and progression of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among participants. This data will provide vital insights to enhance sexual and reproductive health services for women living with HIV, addressing a critical gap in care.

His Honour, the Vice President of Botswana, Ndaba Nkosingithi Gaolathe, attended the the World AIDS day commemoration as Guest Speaker. During his visit to the BHP exhibition stall, Vice President Gaolathe commended the organization for its impactful work.

"I know what you do, and you are doing it well. Continue doing the best," he said, underscoring the importance of BHP's contributions to research and public health in Botswana.

The World AIDS Day event highlighted Botswana's continued commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS through innovation, partnerships, and research. BHP's active participation and showcase of the HOPE-II Study reaffirm its role as a leader in advancing health solutions for vulnerable populations, particularly women living with HIV.



BHP Team pose for a picture with Deputy CEO Dr Gaerolwe Masheto

Bomaid Hands Over Biosafety Cabinets and Signs MOU with BHP



Bomaid CEO Mr Moraki Mokgosana and BHP CEO Dr Joseph Makhema signing the MOU

The Botswana Medical Aid Society (Bomaid) on December 19, 2024, officially handed over three state-of-the-art Biosafety Cabinet Class II Type A2 (BSC A2) units, valued at P495,000, to the Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP) for use at its Botswana Harvard HIV Reference Laboratory (BHHRL). The BSC A2 units are critical for biocontainment in diagnostic and research laboratories, ensuring the safety of researchers, the laboratory environment, and the integrity of biological sample testing.

The addition of these Biosafety Cabinets will significantly enhance laboratory safety by providing a controlled environment that minimizes the risk of exposure to hazardous microorganisms, toxins, and aerosols for researchers and the surrounding environment. Furthermore, the cabinets will improve laboratory workflow by ensuring a sterile workspace, which prevents cross-contamination between samples. This, in turn, enhances the quality and reliability of research outcomes.

With these state-of-the-art cabinets, BHP will be able

to continue expanding its scientific investigations to include virology, molecular biology, immunology, genomic studies of various pathogens, and other high-risk research activities that require stringent biocontainment measures. This capacity will enable BHP to better address emerging health challenges and continue to contribute to healthcare advancement in Botswana.

BHP urgently needed to replace three aging Biosafety Cabinets, which had been in operation for over 20 years and no longer met current laboratory standards. These cabinets have directly supported milestone scientific breakthroughs, such as Botswana's invaluable contributions to global prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) policies and the discovery of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2.

"With Bomaid's generous support, we are creating a safer environment for our scientists and strengthening our capacity for groundbreaking research, training, and capacity building. This partnership enables us to

continue producing scientific discoveries that influence national and global policies and ultimately improve the health and well-being of all Botswana," said Dr Joseph Makhema, CEO of BHP.

"By providing these Laboratory Biosafety Cabinets, Bomaid is directly supporting the safety, efficiency, and success of Botswana's research endeavours. Together, we are fostering an environment that enables

groundbreaking scientific discoveries while ensuring the well-being of our researchers," noted Mr Moraki Mokgosana, CEO of Bomaid.

The handover event also marked the formal signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BHP and Bomaid, further solidifying their collaborative commitment to advancing healthcare and health research in Botswana.



Bomaid CEO Mr Moraki Mokgosana



BHP CEO Dr Joseph Makhema



Bomaid CEO Mr Moraki Mokgosana and BHP CEO Dr Joseph Makhema unveiling the Biosafety Cabinet

BHP Develops New Strategic Plan for 2025-2030

The Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP) has appointed Jupiter Consulting and Services (Pty) Ltd to develop its new five-year Strategic Plan for the period 2025-2030. The decision follows a call for expressions of interest issued in May 2024 to identify a consultant capable of designing a new comprehensive strategic framework. Jupiter Consulting and Services was selected to lead this initiative, with work commencing in November 2024.

The primary objective of the consultancy is to create a strategic framework that accounts for both internal and external factors impacting BHP's operations. The new strategy aims to enhance the organization's effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate as a world-renowned public health institute.

BHP has formed a dedicated project team to oversee the process led by Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Dr Gaerolwe Masheto who serves as Project Manager, with Communications Coordinator Tapela Morapedi appointed as Project Analyst and Executive Management Secretary Bernadette Kgakge serving as Project Secretary.

Additional team members include:

- Prof Sikhulile Moyo - Laboratory Director

- Cornelius Gaetsaloe - Chief Operations Officer
- Dr Gbolahan Ajibola - Principal Investigator
- Dr Kesegofetse Chabaesele - Internal Medicine Site Director
- Tshepho Frank-Klass - Pharmacy Manager
- Omphile Masuku - Acting Human Resources Manager
- Coulson Kgathi - Data Management & Software Engineering Manager
- Tumulano Sekoto - Regulatory Manager
- Ernest Moseki - Community and Stakeholder Relations Coordinator
- Prof Catherine Koofhethile - Principal Investigator
- Dr Ayotunde Omoz-Oarhe - Gaborone CRS Leader and Principal Investigator

To ensure broad input, Jupiter Consulting has conducted interviews with BHP Board Members, Study Coordinators, Principal Investigators, and various key stakeholders, including the University of Botswana, the Ministry of Communication and Technology, the Ministry of Health and perspectives by USA's National Institute of Health (NIH) Division of AIDS (DAIDS).

The final strategy is expected to be delivered by March 2025. The new Strategic plan is anticipated to position BHP for continued success in advancing public health initiatives locally and globally.



BHP Hosts End of Year Celebration to Honor Achievements and Excellence



BHP Staff at the 2024 Year End Event

The Botswana Harvard Health Partnership (BHP) brought the year to a close with a vibrant End of Year event at Boetele Sun Valley Resort on December 13, 2024. The outdoor celebration, themed Safari Oasis, provided an opportunity for employees to unwind, celebrate accomplishments, and look ahead to the coming year.

The event opened with welcome remarks from Grants and Finance Director, Dineo Thebe, who set the tone for the day. She noted that the event was not only meant to celebrate BHP achievements but also to honour the dedication, resilience, and spirit of every individual who makes BHP a beacon of excellence.

Reflecting on the year's key highlights and achievements, BHP Deputy CEO, Dr Gaerolwe Masheto encouraged staff to tirelessly continue living the BHP values in order to fulfill the institution's mandate and realise its mission. "This year, we have demonstrated the power of collaboration, innovation, and commitment. Let us carry these values forward as we strive to break new ground in health research and care," he said.

In closing, Regulatory Manager Tumulano Sekoto

thanked everyone for attending and encouraged feedback to improve future events. "Your feedback shapes our future. Together, we can make every celebration as meaningful and rewarding as the work we do each day," said Sekoto.

The day featured interactive activities, including a "Know Your BHP" trivia session where employees answered questions about the organization for a chance to win a P100.00 gift voucher. Another highlight was Hoop for 100, a lively hula hoop contest in which representatives from various departments and studies competed, with the last person standing winning a P100.00 gift voucher.

The highlight of the event was the presentation of awards in three categories: Performance-Based Awards, Value-Based Awards, and Fun and Creative Awards. Winners were recognized for their exceptional contributions, aligning with BHP's mission, culture, and spirit of collaboration. Each winner received a certificate of appreciation and a P1000.00 gift voucher redeemable at Game Stores.

Performance-Based Awards

• Team Player Award: **Phillimon Sebogodi**

- Outstanding Leadership Award: **Dr. Marcella Yoseph**
- Operational Excellence Award: **Oaitse John**
- Problem Solver Award: **Ame Diphoko**

Value-Based Awards

- Innovation Champion: **Topo Mosinyi**
- Culture Champion Award: **Dr. Dorcas Maruapula**
- Integrity in Action Award: **Kevin Opelokgale**
- Botho Award: **Elizabeth Leboile**

Fun and Creative Awards

- Unsung Hero Award: **Mukani Bhebhe**
- Most Punctual Award: **Aobakwe Mooki**
- Best Dressed Award: **Oteng D. Keitumele**
- Positive Vibes Award: **Olorato Mokime**

The event culminated in the presentation of three prestigious awards, chosen by BHP Chief Executive Officer, Dr Joseph Makhema. Each winner received a trophy, a certificate of appreciation, and a P4000.00 cash prize.

• Team/Study of the Year Award: **Tatelo Plus Study**

Dr Makhema noted that the study recently started enrolling participants and highlighted its eminence by being at the cutting edge of current HIV vaccine , cure, and prevention strategies through administering broadly neutralizing antibodies, “a novel strategy” at the center and focus of research by different NIH funded networks. In infants it could address adherence issues and potential toxicities with long-term antiretroviral treatment (ART) use. He further explained that the use of broadly neutralizing monoclonal antibodies (bNAbs) as part of the study aligns with ongoing HIV cure research, which remains one of the new and key research areas for BHP.



Team/ Study of the Year - **Tatelo Plus Study**

• CEO’s Choice Award: **Dr. Wonderful Choga**

Dr Makhema praised Dr Choga for his outstanding scientific contributions, which have led to multiple BHP publications in high-ranking journals especially in the research laboratory while completing his PhD in record time. He noted that Dr Choga has a quiet and reserved demeanour but voracious in academic pursuit and readily available to support data analysis in various projects.

• Employee of the Year Award: **Terence Mohammed**

Recognized for his exceptional work as Operations Lab Manager, Terence Mohammed was lauded for managing the clinical lab infrastructure, supporting clinical trials, and ensuring laboratory operations meet the highest standards.

The BHP End of Year event celebrated the organization’s collective successes and individual achievements, fostering a sense of appreciation among staff. BHP remains committed to building on these successes in the year 2025.



Employee of the Year - **Terence Mohammed**



CEO’s Choice Award - **Dr. Wonderful Choga**



Team Player Award:
Phillimon Sebogodi



Outstanding Leadership Award:
Dr. Marcella Yoseph



Operational Excellence Award:
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Unsung Hero Award:
Mukani Bhebhe



Most Punctual Award:
Aobakwe Mooki



Best Dressed Award:
Oteng Daddy Keitumele



Positive Vibes Award:
Olorato Mokime

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VISION

To Be a World-Renowned Public Health Institute.

MISSION

To Fight HIV/AIDS and Emerging Public Health Challenges Through Innovative Research, Education, and Capacity Building That Impacts Policy and Practice.

CORE VALUES

BENEFICENCE

INNOVATION

COLLABORATION

EXCELLENCE

BOTHO

Botswana Harvard Health Partnership
Private Bag BO320 Gaborone
Plot No. 1836, Northring Road, Princess
Marina Hospital, Gaborone
Tel: +267 3902671, Fax: +267 3901284
Web: www.bhp.org.bw

