



NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 2

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second issue of the SOFAR newsletter. This edition brings together key moments, achievements, and new developments from across our growing network.

As we continue to strengthen African-led health research, SOFAR supports MSc, PhD, and postdoctoral fellows through training, mentorship, and collaboration across Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mozambique—with valued contributions from our European partners.

We invite you to explore the stories that reflect our commitment to excellence, equity, and sustainable research capacity in the region.

Warm regards,
SOFAR Communications

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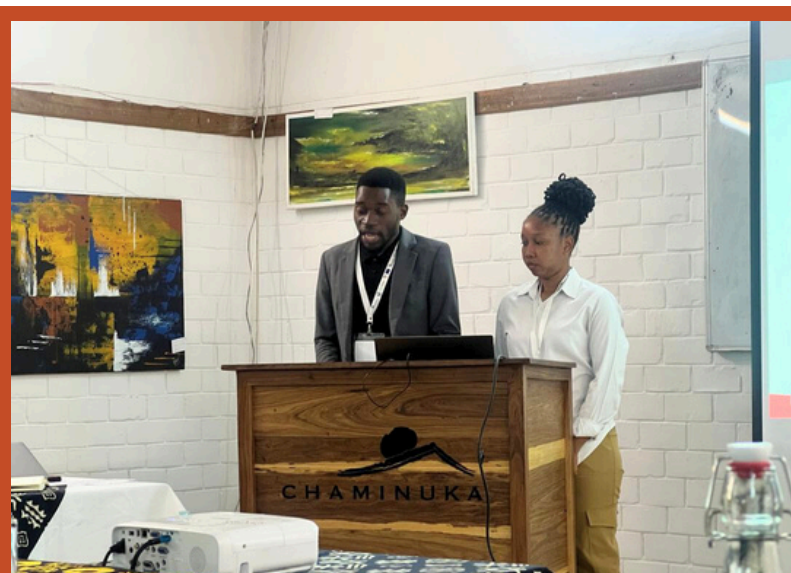
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SOFAR INAUGURAL ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN ZAMBIA

The Southern Africa Research Capacity Network (SOFAR) held its inaugural Annual Meeting from 6–7 November 2025 at the scenic Chaminuka Nature Reserve near Lusaka, Zambia. The two-day event brought together 38 participants, including MSc, PhD fellows, supervisors, mentors, and programme administrators from partner institutions across Southern Africa.

The meeting kicked off with warm welcoming remarks from Dr Kwame Shanaube, Executive Director at Zambart and SOFAR Mentorship Co-Lead. “Hosting this first meeting here in Zambia is special,” Dr Shanaube said. “It’s a chance to show what collaboration looks like when researchers from different countries come together to strengthen science that serves our communities.”

Professor Katharina Kranzer, SOFAR’s Programme Director, highlighted the growing impact of the network. “SOFAR continues to show what’s possible when people work together across borders,” she said. “We are not just training researchers, we are nurturing a community of scientists who support one another and shape the future of health research in Africa.”



Highlights from the SOFAR Annual meeting

SOFAR DELIVERS HEALTH GIS TRAINING IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE

In October, the Biomedical Research and Training Institute (BRTI) hosted Professor Daniela Koller from SOFAR's European partner institution, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), for a week-long Geographic information system (GIS) spatial epidemiology and train-the-trainer course in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The training brought together participants from across the SOFAR network, including trainers from BRTI (Zimbabwe), Zambart (Zambia), and INS (Mozambique) and the network coordinator. The course introduced key concepts in health geography, spatial epidemiology, GPS data collection, geospatial mapping, and GIS-based analysis, while also preparing participants to become future trainers.

The week served as a valuable platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and regional capacity building. Looking ahead, Prof. Koller will continue supporting GIS training at Zambart and INS, as this year's trainees transition into trainers in 2026. The goal is to achieve fully locally led, sustainable GIS training at each SOFAR partner site by the end of the programme—strengthening long-term regional expertise in spatial analysis for public health.



Participants at the GIS workshop in Harare

PHD SUPERVISOR TRAINING IN ZIMBABWE AND ZAMBIA

The Biomedical Research and Training Institute (BRTI) in Zimbabwe and Zambart in Zambia hosted two PhD supervisor training workshops facilitated by Professor Liezel Frick and Dr Nompilo Tshuma from Stellenbosch University.

The workshops provided structured professional development for PhD supervisors, with a strong focus on supporting students throughout their doctoral journey.

The training focused on building evidence-based competencies in communication, leadership, expectation management, and feedback. By addressing the full supervision journey from student selection to progress monitoring and examination, the programme aims to enhance doctoral completion rates and elevate research outcomes.

Participants engaged in interactive discussions and practical exercises, enabling them to apply supervisory theory directly to practice.

"Effective supervision bridges theory and practice, helping supervisors guide doctoral candidates through every stage of the journey."
— Prof. Liezel Frick



Supervisors training workshops in Harare and Lusaka

DR EMMANUEL MUKAMBO RECOGNIZED FOR OUTSTANDING RESEARCH PRESENTATION

SOFAR MSc student Dr Emmanuel Mukambo was awarded a travel grant to attend and present at the 5th African Stroke Organization Conference, held from 3–5 November 2025.

At the conference, he delivered an oral presentation titled “Premature Atherosclerosis as a Risk Factor for Ischemic Stroke in Young People with HIV in Lusaka, Zambia.” His presentation earned him the Best Oral Abstract Presenter Award, recognizing the significance and quality of his research.

He is also one of the recipients of the 2025 Early Career Small Grant, awarded by the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (RSTMH) in partnership with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

This competitive grant supports early-career researchers undertaking innovative clinical and scientific work. With this funding,

Emmanuel will investigate the prevalence and clinical characteristics of syphilis in adult neurology patients at the University Teaching Hospital in Zambia—an area of growing clinical importance.

In addition, Emmanuel recently published two peer-reviewed research articles:

[The association of premature atherosclerosis with ischemic stroke in young people with HIV in Lusaka, Zambia](#)

[The association of antiretroviral therapy type and duration of use with stroke in people living with HIV in Zambia](#)

These achievements reflect his dedication to advancing neurological and infectious disease research in Zambia and contributing to improved patient outcomes through evidence-based practice.



Dr Emmanuel Mukambo wins Best Oral Abstract Presenter Award at African Stroke Organization Conference

DR RICHARD MWAPE PRESENTS BREAKTHROUGH TB FINDINGS AT UNION CONFERENCE IN COPENHAGEN



Dr Richard Mwape shares his TB research findings at the Union TB Conference

Dr Richard Mwape, a PhD fellow at Zambart, presented findings from a pragmatic cluster randomized trial on the diagnosis performance of novel TB infection tests (Cy-Tb and TB-Feron FIA) for the initiation of TB preventive treatment (TPT) in Zambia at the Union Conference in Copenhagen in November 2025. His study explored how well these tests perform compared to the current gold standard and whether they can improve decisions about who should receive preventive TB treatment (TPT).

The project, funded by the Stop TB Partnership under TB REACH wave 10, found that both Cy-Tb and TB-Feron FIA showed high concordance with the established QuantiFERON-TB Gold Plus (QFT-Plus). In other words, the new tests closely matched the reference standard, helping to ensure that people who truly needed preventive treatment were correctly identified, while those who did not were spared unnecessary medication.

These findings are significant for countries with a high TB burden, where resources are limited and treatment decisions must be precise. Mwape's work demonstrates how improved diagnostic tools can reduce inappropriate treatment, optimize resource use, and strengthen TB prevention strategies.

FELLOW FEATURE: DENISE MILICE ON CONNECTING TB AND DIABETES CARE IN MOZAMBIQUE

When SOFAR Fellow Dr Denise Michela Milice (MD, MPH) began working closely with communities in Mozambique, she kept seeing the same pattern: patients navigating both tuberculosis and Type 2 Diabetes, yet moving through a health system that treats each condition as if the other doesn't exist.

This disconnect sparked a deeper question for her — what would it take to truly integrate care for people living with both diseases?

Her recent reflection in International Health Policies explores this question, weaving together on-the-ground experience, gaps she's witnessed in screening and diagnosis, and her vision for a more connected primary healthcare approach.

She also shares how these insights are shaping her proposed PhD research on integrated TB-T2D services.

"The lack of integrated action to respond to TB-T2D comorbidity is worrying," she writes, noting Mozambique's high TB incidence and the growing burden of diabetes.



Dr Denise Mplice

"The stories of patients managing both TB and diabetes are what inspired my research — and why integrated care matters so deeply."
— Denise Michela Milice

Denise's piece offers a thoughtful look at why siloed programs fall short — and how more coordinated care could transform outcomes for patients with complex needs.

Read Denise's full reflection -[Why is the integration of Tuberculosis and Type 2 Diabetes related Health Services necessary in Mozambique?](#)
[A reflection based on a PhD research idea](#)

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW ENGAGES GLOBAL EXPERTS AT AORTIC ONCOLOGY CONFERENCE

SOFAR Post-doctoral Fellow Dr Given Moonga, attended the AORTIC Conference on Oncology in Hammamet, Tunisia from 2-5 November 2025 on a full sponsorship, as part of the African Leadership Training in Oncology Research (ALTOR) program.

This year's conference, themed *"Advancing Cancer Care Across Africa: Equity Through Empowering Research and Education,"* convened leading researchers, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and global stakeholders. Held biennially, the event provides a continental platform for discussing strategies to improve cancer equity and access to care across Africa.

The conference presented an excellent opportunity for scientific networking, knowledge exchange, and exploring collaborative projects in cancer and HIV which align with his postdoctoral work.

DR. FWOLOSHI URGES STRONGER BLOODSTREAM INFECTION MANAGEMENT AT ZAMBIA PHYSICIANS CONFERENCE



Dr. Sombo Fwoloshi highlights urgent need for improved management of bloodstream infections

Dr Sombo Fwoloshi, a SOFAR PhD Fellow, infectious diseases physician, and epidemiologist, delivered a compelling presentation titled “Optimisation of Management of Bloodstream Infections: Contextual Issues for the Frontlines” during the 15th Zambia College of Physicians Scientific Conference and Annual General Meeting held on 29 November in Lusaka, Zambia.

In her presentation, Dr Fwoloshi underscored the serious consequences of untreated bloodstream infections, noting that they can rapidly progress to sepsis—a life-threatening condition. Citing World Health Organization estimates, she highlighted that in 2017 alone, there were approximately 48.9 million cases of sepsis globally, emphasizing the scale and urgency of the problem.

Her talk revisited the global burden of sepsis and explored the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which further complicates treatment outcomes.

She also discussed the significant financial strain sepsis places on health systems and the persistently high mortality rates associated with the condition.

With life expectancy rising across sub-Saharan Africa, Dr Fwoloshi called for intentional and strategic interventions to better prevent, identify, and manage sepsis within this expanding population. She stressed that improving understanding of pathogen epidemiology hinges on strengthening diagnostic services and integrating faster, more reliable diagnostic tools into routine care.

Dr Fwoloshi’s presentation reinforced the pressing need for context-appropriate solutions that empower frontline healthcare workers to detect and manage bloodstream infections promptly—ultimately reducing preventable deaths and supporting stronger, more resilient health systems.

PHD UPGRADE SUCCESS AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT FOR JAYJAY KARUMAZONDO

SOFAR PhD fellow Jayjay Karumazondo has successfully passed his PhD upgrading—an important milestone marking the progress of his ethnographic doctoral research into the experiences and meanings of adolescent wellbeing in rural Zimbabwe.

Prior to this achievement, Jayjay engaged with national and international policymakers to strengthen the policy relevance of his work. He met with Regina Guthold, Technical Officer in the Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing Department at the World Health Organization in Geneva, part of the team responsible for global adolescent health and wellbeing policy and measurement indicators. He also met with Dr Debra Machando, Mental Health Focal Person at the World Health Organization in Zimbabwe, who emphasised how Jayjay's research aligns with ongoing adolescent health and wellbeing initiatives in the country.

These policy discussions will help shape Jayjay's planned comparison of adolescents' lived experiences of wellbeing in rural Zimbabwe with global wellbeing frameworks, ensuring his findings contribute meaningfully to both national and international policy conversations.



A milestone moment: Jayjay and his supervisory team after his PhD upgrade

MEET OUR NEW MSC SOFAR FELLOWS



Miguel Uanea — Mozambique

Statistician and Data Analysis Sector Coordinator at INS, with six years of experience in epidemiology, child health, and vaccination data. Holds advanced training in Biostatistics and is pursuing an MSc to deepen his analytical expertise.



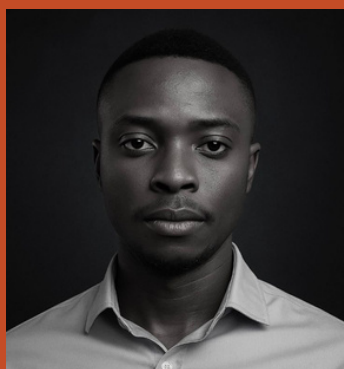
Dr Emmanuel Mukambo — Zambia

Public health researcher focused on neuro-infectious diseases and diagnostic pathways. Joining Zambart while pursuing an MSc in Epidemiology at LSHTM. Passionate about evidence generation to strengthen health systems and improve outcomes for underserved populations.



Lina Zeca Mulhanga Muhate — Mozambique

Biologist at the National Institute of Health with experience in quality management, biomedical research, and genomic surveillance. Now pursuing an MSc in Public Health to advance her impact in disease monitoring and public health strategies.



Cyprain Masvikeni — Zimbabwe

Quantitative researcher and data scientist with the NeoTree Project at BRTI. Works on digital health innovation, neonatal data systems, and predictive modelling. Pursuing an MSc in Epidemiology at LSHTM to advance data-driven newborn health improvement.

DR GIVEN MOONGA, JOINS SOFAR AS POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

Dr Given Moonga is an epidemiologist, Lecturer, and Researcher, as well as a Planetary Health Education & Policy Advisor at the Planetary Health Eastern Africa Hub (PHEAH).

Given is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute and Clinic for Occupational, Social, and Environmental Medicine at the LMU University Hospital in Munich, and a Clinical Epidemiology Lecturer at the University of Zambia. He holds a PhD in Medical Research – International Health from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich.

His work focuses on advancing education and policy initiatives related to planetary health while conducting epidemiological research that addresses pressing global health challenges. His academic and research interests include infectious diseases, cancer epidemiology, planetary health, One Health, and eHealth, with a particular emphasis on strengthening health systems and informing policy development.



Dr Given Moonga

SOFAR WELCOMES BUPE LUNGU AS NEW M&E OFFICER



Bupe Lungu

The SOFAR team is delighted to welcome Bupe Lungu as our new Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.

At SOFAR, Bupe will play a key role in designing and implementing M&E systems that generate high-quality evidence to strengthen decision-making and contribute to improved health outcomes. She will be based at Zambart in Zambia, supporting our mission to deliver impactful, data-driven health programs.

Bupe brings with her extensive expertise in public health data systems, monitoring, and program evaluation. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Public Health, along with an MBA in Operations Management. Her professional experience spans HIV and infectious disease programs, as well as Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH).

TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



Meet **Dr. Celso Khosa** SOFAR's Fellowship Management Lead and a champion for TB/HIV research and public health across Southern Africa. Dr. Celso Khosa combines clinical training, scientific rigor, and a passion for capacity building — qualities that uniquely position him to lead and grow SOFAR's Fellowship programme.

Based at Instituto Nacional de Saúde (INS), in Mozambique Dr. Khosa has led multiple clinical and operational research studies on TB, HIV, and related comorbidities — in both adult and paediatric populations.

He currently serves as Country Principal Investigator or Chief Investigator on several TB-focused trials and epidemiological studies.

Beyond lab work and trials, Dr. Khosa is committed to supporting the next generation of health researchers. He has served on the Institutional Bioethics Committee at INS and contributed to teaching and training, including co-supervising master students and facilitating courses on clinical decision-making for drug-resistant TB.

In his role at SOFAR, Dr. Khosa brings this blend of scientific excellence, ethical leadership, and mentorship.



NEW BEGINNINGS:

Congratulations to Drs Richard Mwape, Denise Melice, and Sombo Fwoloshi, who have begun PhD studies in Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine as SOFAR Fellows with Zambart in Zambia and Instituto Nacional de Saúde (INS) in Mozambique



Dr Richard Mwape

Richard's study will focus on validating the role of respiratory mucosal biomarkers as a diagnostic tool for respiratory tract infections in children



Dr Denise Milice

Sombo's study will focus on Optimizing the Management of Bloodstream Infections in LMICs: An Epidemiological and Implementation Science Approach to Improve Utilization of Bacteriology Services and Clinical Decision-Making for Hospitalized Patients with Bloodstream Infections analyzing the health system's readiness to address this syndemic at macro, meso, and micro levels and understanding the healthcare needs of affected individuals.



Dr Sombo Fwoloshi

Share your news, publications, pictures, announcements: sofarprogramme@gmail.com

THANK YOU!