



SSACAB

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CONSORTIUM
FOR ADVANCED BIOSTATISTICS TRAINING

Welcome to the Sub-Saharan Africa
Consortium for Advanced Biostatistics
(SSACAB) II 1st Newsletter

September - December 2024



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Since inception, the SSACAB program has awarded scholarships to 121 MSc fellows and 24 PhD fellows from the year 2018, creating a robust foundation for biostatistical research excellence.

For the second phase of the SSACAB program, we have 42 MSc, PhD and postdoctoral fellows that have been enrolled at all the partner institutions:

- **University of Abomey-Calavi:** has enrolled 3 MSc fellows; 2 PhD fellows and 1 Post-doctoral fellow
- **University of Pretoria:** has 2 fellows at UP with 1 fellow placed at University of Malawi; 1 fellow at UP itself, 2 at University of Malawi and Malawi Liverpool and 1 Post-doctoral fellow.
- **Moi University:** has enrolled 2 MSc fellows; 3 PhD fellows and 1 Post
- **University of KwaZulu-Natal:** has enrolled 2 MSc fellows at UKZN with 2 fellows that are placed at KCMUCo and 2 fellows at UKZN.
- **KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme:** has enrolled 4 MSc fellows; and 1 PhD fellow.
- **University of Witwatersrand:** has enrolled 3 MSc fellows; 4 PhD fellows and 2 Postdoctoral fellows.

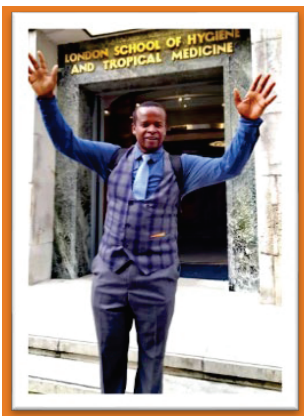
Achievements

On the 11th of September 2024 the secretariat conducted a workshop to review the expected project outputs. The workshop was facilitated by an experienced facilitator. The workshop resulted in several action points towards expected project outputs. These will be actioned as the programme continues.



In above images we have the following SSACAB Workshop attendees (not necessarily in that order): Prof Tobias Chirwa (Program Director), Prof Eustatius Musenge (Deputy Director), Caroline Vika (Program Manager), Losh Naidoo (Wits SPH Finance Officer), Patrick Malatji (WHC Grants Manager), Dimakatso Cele (WHC Grant Accountant), Vuyisani Keeper Ngobeni (SSACAB Grant Manager), Mlungisi Mphetshwa (Public Engagement for Science Manager), Promise Majozi (Program Administrator), Nqobile Dlamini (M&E Manager) and Wilma Pelsler (External Facilitator).

Conferences and trainings



Professor Musenge (Deputy Director) attended the annual Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Conference in September 2024. The RSS conference brought together the statistics and data science community from across the UK, Europe and around the world to share knowledge and learn about any data science related latest developments. University of the Witwatersrand is currently working on renewing the accreditation with the RSS as this reinforces the credibility of the courses being offered, provides students with a gateway to society membership and a competitive edge within the job market. While he was in London, he visited the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), a SSACAB II partner institution, to discuss with the team on consortium related issues including training and PhD supervision opportunities by the site.

Caroline Vika (CV) attended the World Epidemiology Congress in Cape Town, to amplify SSACAB's visibility by showcasing on its activities. She got an opportunity to meet different stakeholders, and some were not aware of the consortium. On the above picture, CV was interacting with our Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Member, Professor Charles Chasela.



Public engagement example either focus on interesting

Two online Teams meetings have been conducted including our current fellows (MSc, PhD & Post-Docs), partner institutional leads, supervisors and communication representatives from various partner institutions.



The first meeting was held on 1st August 2024. It was well attended and had guest speaker, Prof Halima Twabi, from University of Malawi, Zomba, Malawi. She shared her experience on Public Engagement for science which she applied in her research.

The 2nd meeting was on the 3rd of October 2024. The meeting was well attended and had guest speakers (Prof Kathleen Kahn and F. Xavier Gómez-Olivé from the South African Medical Research Council / Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand. They shared their experiences on how they have and continue to engage the communities while conducting studies for the past 30 years in the Agincourt, Mpumalanga area, South Africa.

Professor Kathleen Kahn is Professor in Wits School of Public Health where she heads the interdisciplinary PhD programme in Public and Population Health. She is also the Principal Scientist in SAMRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit where she leads the portfolio of trials in adolescent health and development.



Associate Professor F. Xavier Gómez-Olivé, PhD. MD. (Medical Epidemiologist, Specialist in Public Health and Preventive Medicine at the Wits School of Public Health, and Associate Director of SAMRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit. His research spans a range of non-communicable disease projects, and he leads emerging work on sleep studies.

Introducing SSACAB Postdoctoral Fellows



We would like to welcome one of our PhD fellows. Edson, to the fellowship. Edson Mwebesa is a PhD Biostatistics SSACAB II scholar at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya. He is the first graduate in the pioneer class of Master of Biostatistics under the SSACAB I scholarship at the 71st graduation ceremony on 17th May 2021 at Makerere University, Uganda. Currently, he is faculty in the Department of Mathematics at Muni University, Uganda. He is a former Statistician consultant at the Infectious Disease Institute (IDI) Limited, College of Health Sciences, Kampala Uganda. He has facilitated courses in data management and analysis at IDI, Mountains of the Moon University, Fort Portal Uganda, and Muni University, Uganda among others. He has supported different studies under Unicef, USAID, Amref Uganda and the Impact Evaluation for Evidence-based Decision (IEED) project of Makerere School of Public Health. Currently, his research focus is on impact missingness in propensity score analysis.

SSACAB Institutional Lead Meeting in Johannesburg

The secretariat team is planning a workshop to bring together partner institutional leads to meet in Johannesburg, South Africa early 2025. The aim is to discuss the ongoing SSACAB activities, public engagement activities and ways of acquiring supplementary funding for the Consortium's future sustainability. The Secretariat will be sending out a poll in the next few weeks to enquire which dates might be suitable for all concerned

For any queries, please contact Promise Majozi SSACAB administrator at pmajozi@wits.ac.za

