

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

2 APRIL 2024



Welcome back!

We hope you all had a blessed and restful Easter break!

UPDATES

Chiedza Trial disseminates results in Bulawayo

From March 25th to 26th, the CHIEDZA trial disseminated its results to stakeholders in Bulawayo. The dissemination process commenced with a meeting involving key representatives from the Bulawayo City Council, followed by community dissemination sessions with CHIEDZA participants and community care workers in Nkulumane. The CHIEDZA trial was a cluster-randomized study designed to assess the impact of community-based integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for youth on HIV and other health outcomes. The following are some of the key results that were shared during the dissemination:

- A total of 78,810 visits by youth were recorded, accounting for 35% of all visits in Bulawayo.
- The majority of visits were made by females, comprising 72% of the total.
- Over 38,000 HIV tests were conducted, contributing to increased awareness of individuals' HIV status.
- There was a high uptake of condoms among males, with over 90% utilizing this essential preventive measure.
- Females demonstrated a high uptake of menstrual hygiene products, exceeding 95%.
- There was a significant uptake of STI testing, surpassing 85%.
- The prevalence of STIs among youth was found to be high, affecting approximately one in five individuals; however, partner notification had a low uptake of only 6%.

The dissemination of results has provided valuable insights into the utilization of SRH services by youth in Bulawayo, shedding light on areas of success, such as high condom and menstrual hygiene product uptake, as well as areas requiring further attention, such as partner notification for STIs. The CHIEDZA trial's results have laid the foundation for ongoing dialogue and collaborative efforts aimed at addressing the challenges faced by young individuals in accessing and utilizing comprehensive SRH services.



Dissemination of the CHIEDZA trial results in Bulawayo

KOSHESAI community workshops fosters dialogue on ageing

From March 12th to 13th, the KOSHESAI study conducted a series of community workshops with older people (aged 60+ years old) aimed at exploring the experiences and needs of older individuals regarding their functional ability and overall wellbeing. Participants engaged in lively discussions, sharing their perspectives on the aging process and highlighting various health issues they have encountered.

The workshops included comprehensive presentations on KOSHESAI services, which involved screening for health conditions such as vision, hearing, cognition, weight, and mental health. These assessments provided valuable insights into the participants' current health status and allowed for tailored discussions on their thoughts and concerns regarding the study.

The overarching goal of KOSHESAI is to develop and implement an evidence-based clinical framework for non-specialist assessment and management of chronic disorders associated with aging that impact functional ability. By addressing these issues, KOSHESAI aims to enhance the health and wellbeing of older individuals residing in Zimbabwe.

The community workshops proved instrumental in fostering dialogue, gathering valuable input, and ensuring that KOSHESAI's initiatives align with the needs and aspirations of the community. Through this collaborative approach, KOSHESAI strives to make a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of older people in Zimbabwe.



Congratulations to Tafadzwa Madanhire!

We are thrilled to announce that Tafadzwa has been awarded the prestigious 2024 ESCO-Islene Araujo de Carvalho Prize for his outstanding PhD work and future plans. Tafadzwa's submissions to the World Congress of Osteoporosis - International Osteoporosis Foundation Conference, scheduled to take place in London this April, caught the attention of the selection committee. He submitted three abstracts, each reflecting a substantial component of his groundbreaking PhD research. It is truly an exceptional achievement to receive this esteemed prize, as only one recipient is honoured each year. Tafadzwa's dedication, hard work, and innovative contributions to the field of osteoporosis research have been recognized on this global platform.



Neotree holds community engagement trainings for mothers and caregivers

The week of March 18th, marked a momentous occasion as Neotree hosted Mr Lekodi Magombo, Senior Program Manager of the Art and Global Health Centre in Malawi. Mr Magombo visited to provide guidance and support on Neotree's community engagement initiatives utilizing participatory arts. The community engagement workstream is a core component of Prof Michelle Heys' NIHR Global Health Professorship. Through this workstream, Neotree aims to empower women and families to play an active and meaningful role in providing care to small and vulnerable babies. This will be achieved through the establishment of patient and public involvement (PPI) groups at hospital facilities. These consultative bodies aim to incorporate the perspectives of patients, carers, and the general public into healthcare research, policy, and practice.

On March 18th and 19th, Lekodi (ArtGlo) and Faith (Neotree) conducted full-day workshops for mothers' groups at Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital (CPH), followed by two more workshops on the 20th and 21st at Sally Mugabe Central Hospital (SMCH). Utilizing participatory methods such as songs, drama, dance, and facilitation skills, eight mothers at CPH and ten at SMCH were equipped to educate their peers on newborn care, prenatal visits, postnatal care, vaccinations, mental wellness, and more. These participatory methods proved effective in engaging the mothers and enabling them to share vital information. Neotree nurse ambassadors, Prisca Nyamapfeni (SMCH), and Sarudzai Chigwende (CPH), actively taught the mothers about essential newborn care measures that the PPI group mothers could share with others in the work they intend to do at their local primary healthcare facilities and the hospital.

The workshops conducted by Mr Magombo and Faith were instrumental in empowering mothers and building their capacity to advocate for better care practices for newborns. Through the utilization of participatory arts and the dedication of Neotree nurse ambassadors, the workshops facilitated knowledge transfer and empowered the mothers to become advocates for improved healthcare practices in their communities.

Mr Lekodi Magombo Delivers Presentation on ARTGLO's Work

On March 22nd, Mr Magombo delivered an informative presentation on the initiatives of the Art and Global Health Centre (ARTGLO), which incorporate art into community outreach programs. The presentation took place at the THRU_ZIM Research Unit offices, where Mr Magombo detailed how Neotree is utilizing these principles to enhance engagement with patients, caregivers, and the public regarding health priorities related to mothers and newborn care.

All those in attendance greatly appreciated Mr Magombo's insights and hands-on assistance in advancing Neotree's meaningful partnerships with local hospitals. By combining participatory arts with leadership development, ARTGLO strives to ignite positive change and create healthier communities.



TAURA workshops

From March 14th to 15th, the TAURA study team successfully conducted participatory workshops with women aged 18 – 60 years old to better understand their menstrual experiences and menstrual health related issues. Over the next two years, the TAURA (“Speak Up” in Shona) study will use a participatory action research approach (PAR) to understand what women and healthcare providers need to address MH-related issues (including managing menstrual pain and bleeding, accessing menstrual products, water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, and accessing MH-related healthcare) in urban and peri-urban settings in Zimbabwe, and the impact of these needs on their quality of life (QoL). With key stakeholders, the study will co-create a film, and co-create, pilot, evaluate an MH resource and training package (“MH Toolkit”) for women and healthcare providers.

EMPOWA graduation successfully held at the University of Zimbabwe

On March 22nd, a joyous occasion took place at the University of Zimbabwe as 33 graduates of the EMPOWA (Empowering Professionals for the Wellbeing of Adolescents) Programme received their well-deserved diplomas. This event marked a celebration of the remarkable achievements of these policy makers and programmers who actively participated in the program. Over the course of 12 months, they dedicated themselves to designing and implementing impressive “change projects” within their respective organizations, all with the aim of improving adolescent wellbeing. Each graduate was presented with a Certificate of Competence, jointly awarded by BRTI, UZ, and LSHTM, recognizing their successful completion of the EMPOWA Programme. We extend our warmest congratulations to the entire EMPOWA Organizing Group, namely Constance Mackworth-Young, Marvellous Mhloyi, Aveneni Mangombe, David Ross, Rashida Ferrand, Jacqueline Gumbo, Jayjay Karumazondo, Kelvin Jani, Linnet Zvoushe, and Debrain Mugarapanyama. Their dedication and efforts have played an instrumental role in the success of this programme.



5 MINUTES WITH...

Dr Mandi Tembo



Dr Mandi Tembo

What do you do and when did you start?

I wear many hats and I absolutely love it! I am the public engagement lead for THRU ZIM and a postdoctoral research fellow (funded by the Reckitt Global Hygiene Institute). As part of my fellowship, I am leading a study aimed at using participatory action research to co-create and pilot a menstrual health intervention aimed at capacitating healthcare providers to better address the menstrual health needs of women in communities and improve the menstrual experiences of women in Zimbabwe. As the public engagement lead, my work includes leading internal and external THRU ZIM communities, engagement activities for multiple studies within THRU ZIM and training programs such as the Youth Researchers Academy.

And when did I start? I officially started at THRU ZIM when I started my PhD in 2018. My PhD investigated the acceptability and effectiveness of a comprehensive menstrual health and hygiene intervention nested within a community-based sexual and reproductive health program (called CHIEDZA) for young people aged 16 – 24 years across Zimbabwe.

Where can we find you in the office?

LOL... If you can find me! Just joking... I work and live between London and Harare so, if I am in Harare, you can usually find me at my desk in the office behind the reception desk. If I am not at my desk, I am always available online.

What do you enjoy about your work?

Absolutely EVERYTHING! There is so much to love about the work I do and the people I get to work with. I love that I get to work on several different projects at the same time and that all these projects, from KOSHESAI to TAURA, are aimed at improving the health and lived experiences of people in Zimbabwe. I also love that I get to engage in innovative research that explores using art, science, and activism to promote overall health well-being.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for participation - help shape recruitment and consent in cluster randomised trials involving children and neonates!

We invite you to participate in 'The Cluster Study', exploring recruitment and consent processes in cluster randomised trials (CRTs) involving children and neonates. Your insights are crucial in shaping the future of these trials. By completing a short 5-minute survey, you can help identify key issues to prioritize in interviews and focus groups. Your input will influence the development of guidance in this critical area. Please access the survey here: <https://liverpool.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/cluster-study>. For any questions or further information, please contact Dr Kerry Woolfall (woolfall@liverpool.ac.uk) or Dr Beth Deja (bdeja1@liverpool.ac.uk).

OPPORTUNITIES

MRC funding opportunity for African researchers

The Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) are pleased to announce an open funding opportunity. This grant aims to support exceptional early to mid-career African researchers in conducting outstanding global health research across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The funding supports researchers in partnership with UK-based institutions and enthusiastic local research environments. The programme aims to attract and retain talented 'rising star' individuals who will lead high-quality research on key global health issues relevant to SSA. Awards, providing support for up to five years, range from £250,000 to £750,000. Applications are open from January 24th to 24 April 24th, 2024. Please visit this link for more information: <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/african-research-leaders/>

Call for submissions - Inclusive Menstruation: Practice, Research, Action Conference

Wednesday 29th May 2024, Liverpool John Moores University, UK

Menstruation Research has continued to grow since the establishment of The Menstruation Research Network UK (MRN) in 2018. We have seen shifts in policy, research, practice and understanding of the varied experiences of people who menstruate. An intersectional and inclusive approach to the study of – and advocacy for – menstruation and menstruators is more important than ever. This is particularly true at a time where many governments are making repeated attacks on the most marginalised people in society, from people seeking asylum to our trans and gender diverse siblings, and from international students – for example, through restrictive visa reforms in the UK – to our rights in workplaces. How does this environment impact people who menstruate, their access to menstrual management, and public understandings of menstruation? This conference seeks contributions from academics, activists, artists, policymakers and organisations of all kinds to discuss how we make our work on menstruation inclusive. For more information and to submit your proposal, please use the online form here: <https://menstruationresearchnetwork.org.uk/call-for-papers/>

Share your news, publications, pictures, announcements: publicengagement@thruzim.org. Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ThruZim>

THANK YOU!