



UPDATES

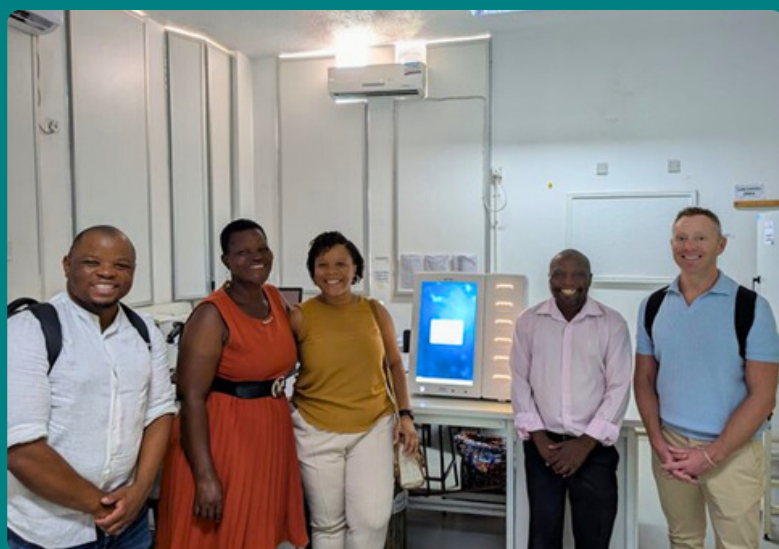
Roche team visit the AVAPAR study team

The AVAPAR-EPLEX study team recently welcomed representatives from Roche Diagnostics, Adam Thornberg (Roche, Global Medical Affairs) and Themba Ntuli (Roche, Southern Africa Medical Affairs), to Sally Mugabe Central Hospital – laboratory and Neonatal Unit, to observe practices and see where the platform will contribute to blood culture workflows in the care of septic neonates.

The AVAPAR-EPLEX study is working to develop several aspects of blood culture practices, specifically in neonatal sepsis, partnering with the Sally Mugabe Central Hospital Laboratory. Alongside pre-analytical and post-analytical phases focusing on ward and clinic staff training and communication of results, the analytical phase of blood cultures takes place in the laboratory. During this phase, the organisms causing sepsis and the antibiotics that would appropriately treat an infection are investigated, a process that can be hugely subjective, time-consuming, and challenging in resource-limited settings due to stockouts and frequent staff rotation. As such, molecular diagnostic platforms, like the COBAS ePlex platform from Roche Diagnostics, provide the potential for rapid organism identification which is less reliant on multiple consumables than traditional techniques. This offers the potential for results that could be quickly communicated to clinicians and impact patient care, in contrast to previous work in similar settings which has demonstrated that less than 5% of blood culture results are available in a timely fashion to affect patient care.

Adam has worked tirelessly to secure delivery of the COBAS ePlex platform and consumables to Harare, the first time an ePlex platform has been in Africa. This offers huge scope for improved efficiency of the blood culture process, reducing turnaround times and offering antibiotic guidance to clinicians early enough that the care of neonates can be improved through rapid results. The study team are hugely grateful to the Roche team for their enthusiasm, hard work and endeavour in ensuring its delivery to improve the health of Zimbabwean neonates.

It is hoped that this visit will be the first of many as Roche offers its strong commitment to infection research in Zimbabwe.



The AVAPAR-EPLEX study team and Roche representatives at Sally Mugabe Hospital

Leadership changes at BRTI and THRU ZIM

Exciting leadership transitions are underway at BRTI and THRU ZIM, marking the end of an era and the beginning of a new chapter.

After years of dedicated service, Dr. Shungu Munyati is set to retire as Director General of BRTI. Her steadfast leadership has been instrumental in advancing research and nurturing countless researchers toward independence. Her contributions to training and research capacity development have left an indelible mark, and she leaves behind a strong foundation for future growth.

Stepping into this role during this transition period, Ms. Ethel Dauya has been appointed Acting Director General of BRTI. With extensive experience in training, research, and management, Ms. Dauya is well-positioned to steer BRTI forward. Her expertise and familiarity with the organization make her a natural fit for this role, and her appointment has been met with widespread support.

This change means Ms. Dauya will now be based at BRTI (10 Seagrave) for four days a week, with Tuesdays dedicated to THRU ZIM.

As BRTI and THRU ZIM navigate this transition, the entire team extends its best wishes to Dr. Munyati in her well-earned retirement, and congratulations to Ms. Dauya on her interim appointment.

The future remains bright as the organizations continue their commitment to research excellence and capacity development.



Ms Ethel Dauya

The Southern Africa research capacity network recruits two PhD scholars

We are thrilled to announce the recruitment of two PhD scholars, JayJay Karumazondo and Fiona Gambanga, under the SOuthern aFrica Research cApacity netwoRk (SOFAR).

JayJay's medical anthropology research will focus on focusing on exploring the meanings and experiences of wellbeing or 'feeling good' among adolescents in Zimbabwe.

Fiona's epidemiology work centers on understanding the role of Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy in the subsequent development of chronic hypertension among young adults in Zimbabwe.

SOFAR aims to train a new generation of world-class African researchers, scientists, clinicians, and public health professionals who can tackle pressing infectious disease challenges with a focus on innovation, resilience, and equity. The program emphasizes multidisciplinary collaboration and is committed to building a robust research capacity in Africa.



JayJay shares a lighter moment with Dr Constance Mackworth-Young

Y-Check Zimbabwe visits study sites in Ghana and Tanzania

In December, the Y-Check Zim team had the privilege of visiting the Y-Check study sites in Mwanza, Tanzania, and Cape Coast, Ghana. The trip offered the team a chance to observe Y-Check in action and witness firsthand the innovative improvements and in-country adaptations of the intervention.

One highlight was exploring the use of the Y-Check digital platform that seamlessly links participant screening results, management processes, and referral attendance statistics in real-time. Alongside these invaluable learnings, the team enjoyed rich discussions, cross-pollination of ideas, and some delicious food. Y-Check Zimbabwe extends heartfelt gratitude to the Y-Check Ghana and Tanzania teams for their incredible hospitality and for sharing their insights and ideas for the next phase of the Y-Check intervention.



Y-Check Zimbabwe visits study sites in Tanzania and Ghana

Neotree supports midwives through the Golden Hour project

In January 2025, Neotree reported a significant increase in the uptake of the Golden Hour project by midwives in the labour ward at Sally Mugabe Central Hospital, with adoption rates rising from 43% to 80%. The project is designed to strengthen the implementation of critical newborn interventions within the first hour of life, a period known to have a significant impact on reducing neonatal mortality.

Neotree's facilitator, Rachel Poffley, emphasized that this progress reflects growing engagement with the initiative and expressed optimism that uptake will continue to rise as these life-saving practices become embedded into routine care. Rachel stated, "We are working closely with the team to ensure these actions become standard practice going forward."

Neotree is an innovative digital platform that supports healthcare workers in neonatal care by providing real-time clinical decision support, data collection, and training.



Midwives adopting life-saving practices into routine care.

Capturing life through their lenses - Chitungwiza teens share their stories

Y-Check recently concluded the training of 15 adolescents aged 13-19 years in Photovoice as part of a health and well-being study for adolescents living in Chitungwiza. As experts of their own lives and community, the participants took on the role of active agents and co-researchers, sharing their perceptions and capturing images of what they believe constitutes a “good” or “bad” life for an adolescent living in Chitungwiza through visual storytelling.

One participant, who chose the name “Anonymous,” shared her excitement about being able to communicate her view of the world through images. As she snapped pictures, she highlighted the things that make her feel safe and empowered, as well as the struggles that impact her daily life. “I never knew how much I could tell with just one photo,” she said. “This experience taught me to look at my life and my community in a different way.”

For this research, all participants were equipped with digital cameras and received ethical and technical training from a professional photographer before embarking on their photographic assignments. Young people embraced this new way to express themselves through the lens of a camera.

Their work will be part of a larger portfolio used to:

- Advocate for adolescent-friendly well-being programs and initiatives.
- Guide the measurement and monitoring of adolescent well-being.
- Inform the next steps of the Y-Check project.
- Assist policymakers and researchers in designing and implementing interventions that truly reflect the needs, priorities, and contextual circumstances of Zimbabwean adolescents.

Stay tuned as we share more photos and insights from these incredible young voices!



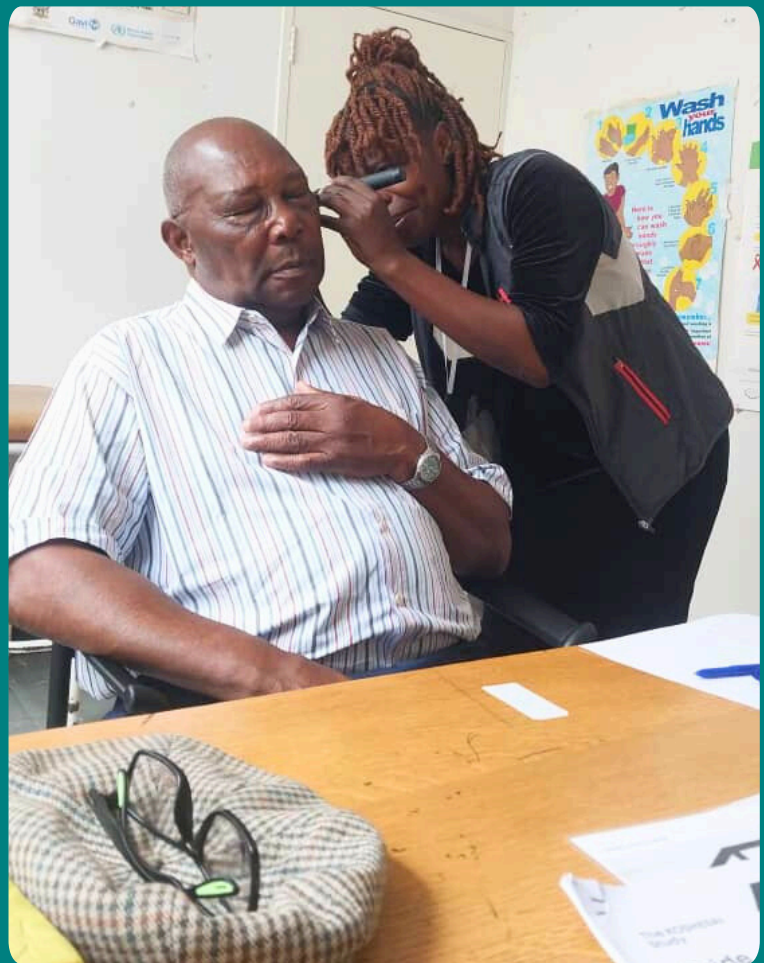
Young people participate in Photovoice training

KOSHESAI study pilots assessment and intervention with first participants in Mufakose and Highfield

On Friday, January 24th, the KOSHESAI study (Keeping Older People Healthy: Designing and Evaluating Effective Health Services to Maintain Functional Ability) successfully piloted the study assessment and intervention with the first participants in Mufakose and Highfield. Over the next few weeks, the study will gradually scale up recruitment, which will continue until June, followed by a four-month follow-up to assess the intervention's impact on older adults' well-being.

This milestone follows three weeks of intensive training for the new KOSHESAI study team at THRU ZIM. The team includes nurses, research assistants, social scientists, and PhD fellows, all working together on the KOSHESAI study.

KOSHESAI is a hybrid effectiveness-intervention study focused on a co-designed healthy ageing check for community-dwelling older adults in Zimbabwe. The study aims to develop and implement an evidence-based clinical framework for non-specialist assessment and management of chronic conditions that affect functional ability, ultimately improving health and well-being.



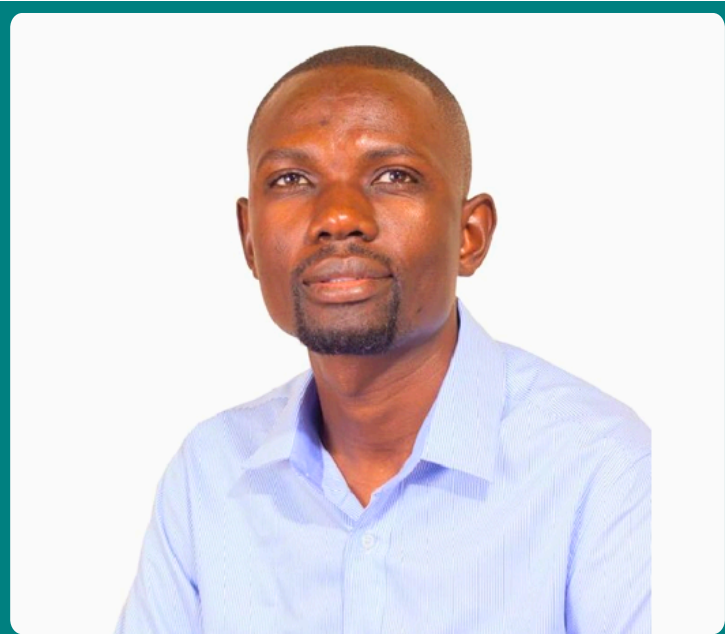
Participants go through hearing tests in Mufakose and Highfield

Collins Timire receives Woodruff Prize for groundbreaking research on TB in Zimbabwe

We are thrilled to announce that Collins Timire has been awarded the Woodruff Prize, recognizing his exceptional work on “The impact of drug-resistant tuberculosis on livelihoods and the mitigating effects of conditional cash transfers in Zimbabwe.”

Awarded annually to outstanding doctoral students, the Woodruff Prize prioritizes clinical research and studies with the potential to alleviate suffering in tropical or developing regions. The prize will be formally presented at the upcoming graduation ceremony in February 2025

Congratulations Collins on this well-deserved honor.



Collins Timire

Eleven THRU ZIM staff awarded Smile and Shine professional development funding

Eleven THRU ZIM staff members were awarded the Smile and Shine professional development funding after successfully pitching their ideas to a panel on January 17. The awards celebrate their dedication and innovative thinking as they present visions for both personal and organizational growth. From groundbreaking solutions to professional development aspirations, their presentations showcased the incredible potential within our team. Huge congratulations to all!

Here are the ideas and projects they will embark on in 2025:

- Cuthbert Sekanevana – MSc in Child-Sensitive Social Policies
- Mary Kabasa – Class 4 driver's license and defensive driving certification
- Warren Chimonyo – Certificate in Transport and Logistics
- Debson Munemo – MSc in Monitoring and Evaluation
- Kundai Redzo – MSc in Clinical Psychology
- Ellen Chiyindiko – Certificate in Graphic Design
- Tadias Manyanga – Clinical Research Associate Certification
- Agnes Ngirazi – Executive Diploma in Computerised Accounting
- Raphael Nyahwedengwe – Certificate of Theory in Accounting
- Cyprain Masvikeni – Class 4 driver's license and defensive driving certification
- Tawanda Nyengetera – Certificate in Data Protection

We look forward to seeing their growth and the impact of these initiatives in the coming year!



From interviews to awards: Smile & Shine award recipients gave it their best shot

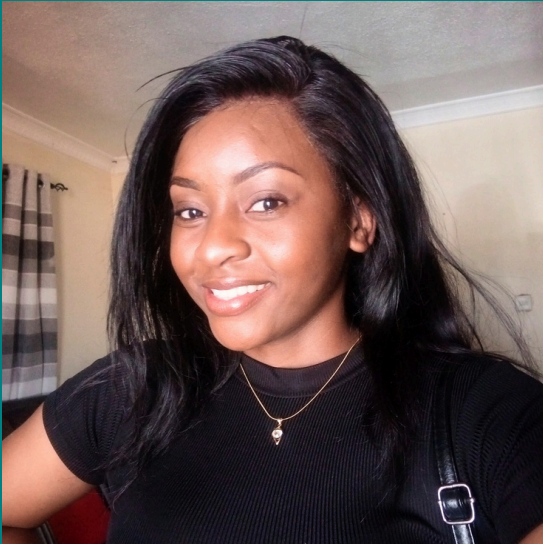
Welcome new employees

THRU ZIM is happy to welcome two new members to our growing team.

Lovender Kunaka joins us as a Research Assistant on the INSIGHT Study, which explores the role of therapeutic alliance in reducing symptoms of depression.

Nomsa Mugwagwa, an intern with the Neotree Study, will support ongoing efforts to enhance neonatal care and outcomes.

We look forward to their contributions and wish them success in their roles.



Lovender



Nomsa

5 MINUTES WITH...

JayJay Karumazondo



What do you do and when do you start?

I am a qualitative researcher and currently a SOuthern aFrica Research cApacity netwoRk (SOFAR) PhD fellow. This year, I will be starting my PhD in Medical Anthropology with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine focusing on exploring the meanings and experiences of wellbeing among adolescents in Zimbabwe.

Where can we find you in the office?

I am temporarily located in the Field Management/PhD office with other fellows

Who and/or what inspires you?

I have been inspired by numerous individuals who have played a significant role in my personal and professional development. I've had the privilege of working with many incredible doctors and professors, each of whom has instilled in me the importance of research and community engagement.

Why is qualitative research important, and what do you enjoy most about it?

Qualitative research is important because it allows for a deep exploration of people's experiences, feelings, thoughts, and social phenomena. It provides a more nuanced understanding of complex human behaviors, interactions, and societal patterns.

Qualitative research helps uncover the "why" and "how" behind observed patterns, offering insights into underlying reasons, motivations, and meanings that might be missed in purely numerical analyses. It also allows researchers to explore new, emerging areas of inquiry without being confined to predetermined hypotheses or rigid conceptualizations. My previous work on qualitative research and community engagement have shown the value of participants' voices, focusing on their perspectives and lived experiences. I enjoy the opportunity to engage closely with participants, building trust and rapport, which often leads to rich, personal insights. I also enjoy co-creation of interventions with participants.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Join the Symposium on Tuberculosis care

Attend this hybrid symposium titled: Person-Centred Care for Tuberculosis-Affected Households

Date: 11 February 2025

Time: 12:30 - 14:00 (GMT)

Format: Hybrid (in-person and online)

Venue: Lecture Theatre, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London WC1E 7HT

Join via zoom: lshtm.zoom.us/j/93881522214

Join Professor Arjune Sen as he delivers a seminar on “Intersections between Epilepsy and Dementia: A Global Challenge.”

Date: 10 February 2025

Time: 14:00–15:00 HRS (CAT)

Venue: THRU ZIM Gazebo (In-person)

Virtual Access: Join Zoom

Meeting ID: 916 6662 4553

Password: 400632

Explore the “Consequences of stress during pregnancy for mothers and offspring: insights from evolutionary biology” by Dr. Sinead English,

Date: Monday, 17 February 2025

Time: 13:00 - 13:35 (CAT)

Venue: THRU ZIM Gazebo (In-person)

Join virtually on Zoom:

Meeting ID: 987 8697 3528

Password: 944519

Join the seminar between LSHTM and MITU which explores the role that rumours and misinformation play in global public health initiatives, looking at vaccine programmes in East and West Africa.

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/events/capturing-context-rumours-evaluations>

MSc student projects

We are now coming to the time of year when MSc students at LSHTM are reaching out to find projects. If anyone has a project that they think an MSc student could undertake, and/ or would like to supervise an MSc student, please contact THRU ZIM MSc lead Constance Mackworth-Young on constance.mackworth-young1@lshtm.ac.uk. The project could include secondary data analysis, or primary data collection.

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

THANK YOU!