



UPDATES

PIMS hosts expert dialogue to address the needs of pregnant children in Zimbabwe

On 22 August the Pregnancy in Minors Study (PIMS) hosted a successful expert dialogue with national-level stakeholders to discuss the study's preliminary quantitative and qualitative findings and explore ways to improve care for pregnant children in Zimbabwe. The event brought together representatives from the Ministry of Health and Childcare (including departments focused on children's rights, mental health, and adolescent sexual and reproductive health), the Ministry of Public Services, Labour, and Social Welfare, donor agencies such as UKAID, UNDP, and UNFPA, as well as international and local NGOs, CBOs, and CSOs that support children in various capacities.

This roundtable marks the first in a series of discussions aimed at integrating research with actionable strategies to meet the needs of pregnant children and alleviate their vulnerability. The PIMS team is dedicated to facilitating meaningful collaboration among stakeholders to develop evidence-based, long-term interventions that can significantly improve the lives of young mothers in Zimbabwe.

By fostering a platform for key stakeholders to collaborate, the PIMS study aims to pave the way for tangible strategies that will enhance the well-being and future prospects of pregnant children across the country.



Stakeholders at the PIMS expert dialogue meeting

Congratulations Dr. Edith Majonga on receiving the Wellcome Trust Early Career Award!

It is with immense pride that we share that Dr. Majonga has been awarded the prestigious Wellcome Trust Early Career Award, a first for Zimbabwe!

This remarkable five-year fellowship, based between the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and THRU ZIM/BRTI, will support her continued research and professional growth.

Dr. Majonga, a dedicated researcher and trained radiographer, has shown an unwavering commitment to advancing cardiovascular health research in HIV. Since joining BRTI as a Research Fellow in 2014, she has made significant strides in her field. Her groundbreaking PhD work at LSHTM revealed a high prevalence and incidence of echocardiographic abnormalities in children with perinatal HIV in Zimbabwe, highlighting a critical area for further study.

Building on her PhD findings, Dr. Majonga will use this fellowship to characterize cardiac disease in African youth with perinatally-acquired HIV, utilizing advanced multimodal imaging techniques. Her research, titled "Characterisation of Cardiovascular Disease in African Youth with Perinatally-Acquired HIV Infection in the Era of Antiretroviral Therapy," is poised to make a lasting impact on global health.

Congratulations, Dr. Majonga on this remarkable achievement!



DR EDITH MAJONGA

THRU ZIM showcases mental health initiatives

On 26th August, THRU ZIM was honored to present our past and ongoing mental health research to the World Health Organization Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) Mental Health Department, Friendship Bench, and Pamumvuri. This meeting offered a valuable opportunity to highlight our impactful work in mental health and explore exciting potential collaborations across multiple sectors.

Presentations covered a range of mental health research being conducted at THRU ZIM, including community-led interventions, mental health research in adolescents and older adults, mental health and substance use, and mental health in multimorbidity. We also discussed the challenges and opportunities in these areas, highlighting the importance of considering the well-being of carers and household members, especially vulnerable groups such as adolescents, older people, and children.

WHO Mental Health Technical Officer for Zimbabwe Dr. Debra Machando, shared MOHCC and WHO mental health priorities, including research outcomes, and emphasized the importance of collaboration between MOHCC, WHO, stakeholders, and researchers to meet these mental health priorities. One suggestion was to embed university students or recent graduates in research programs at BRTI as volunteers, fostering a new generation of mental health researchers. Prof. Celia Gregson underscored the need for research to be responsive to emerging needs and for researchers to anticipate policy shifts. This proactive approach would ensure that research aligns with the expectations of policymakers and stakeholders, allowing for timely and impactful studies.

A critical point raised during the presentations was the misunderstanding and misuse of the term "counseling." The term is often applied by individuals with minimal training, leading to a failure to meet clients' needs. There is a call for a more accurate term that has not been diluted in meaning. Additionally, concerns about the lack of privacy in mental health service provision were discussed, with a recommendation to reset standards to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of mental health care.

Partners at the meeting agreed to share materials developed and used for national programming and data capture to create synergy between research data and national data, enhancing the impact and coordination of mental health initiatives in Zimbabwe.



THRU ZIM shares past, ongoing and upcoming mental health research to key partners

CoDe Study begins work to transform SRH services in Zimbabwe's tertiary institutions

On 19 and 24 August, the Co-Design and Implementation of a Digital Self-Care Intervention to Improve Sexual and Reproductive Health among Youth in Zimbabwe (CoDe study) held two crucial workshops aimed at co-designing a digital self-care intervention to improve sexual and reproductive health (SRH) among youth in Zimbabwe's tertiary education institutions (TEIs).

These workshops brought together young people from nine TEIs and key stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training, donor agencies, NGOs, and CSOs.

The primary goal of these sessions was to identify the needs, gaps, and priorities in SRH service provision and delivery within TEIs, providing a clear understanding of what is relevant and impactful for the study's design. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, with stakeholders commending the focus on self-care as a central element of SRH programming. Tatenda Songore, Executive Director of Youth Advocates Zimbabwe, said, "Self-care is going to be a game changer, and investing in research now means we are strategically positioning ourselves to inform policy soon."

These workshops are just the beginning of a series of consultations that will shape the CoDe study, ensuring it remains a co-designed initiative with young people and stakeholders. The ultimate aim is to develop a youth-friendly and accessible SRH intervention that can be widely adopted across Zimbabwe's TEIs, making a significant impact on the health and well-being of the nation's youth.



Youth and experts unite to shape the future of sexual and reproductive health in tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe

Neotree participates in the Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) technical workshop

The Neotree team were recently invited to participate in the Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) technical workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia. This event gathered leaders, experts, and implementers from more than 15 countries in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, to discuss strategies and interventions to accelerate progress towards achieving the Every Newborn Action Plan and Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM) targets.

The workshop included several presentations showcasing the progress made in maternal and newborn care, along with innovations in the field. Neotree, which assists healthcare workers (HCWs) diagnose and manage sick newborns via ongoing education and training, and collecting real-time bedside data on newborns, were invited to present its impact in Zimbabwe and Malawi.

Dr. Chimhuya, Principal Investigator for Neotree in Zimbabwe, presented the significant challenges in delivery quality care for newborns and Neotree's approach and achievements since 2019. He specifically highlighted Neotree's impact towards improving the quality of newborn care by reducing rates of hypothermia, optimising prescription of antibiotics, and reducing the turnaround time for blood culture results to be available to inform decision making, overall reducing neonatal mortality in a cost and time efficient manner.

The workshop also featured other innovations from Sinapi Biomedical, Hatch Technologies, Laerdal Foundation and more. Overall, the workshop was a valuable platform for exchanging knowledge and advancing efforts to improve maternal and newborn health globally. Neotree's contributions were well-received, emphasizing the importance of innovative solutions in this critical area of need.



Dr Chimhuya and Karlos Madziva at the ENAP Workshop

5 MINUTES WITH...

Angus de Wilton

What do you do, and when did you start?

My name is Angus de Wilton and by background I am an infectious diseases doctor in the UK. I am at THRU-ZIM for 1 year starting in August 2024 as a research fellow sponsored by the University of Bristol. I am interested in HIV and TB and hope to take part in research on these topics with the amazing team at THRU-ZIM.

Where can we find you in the office?

You can find me in the 'Field management' office on the left as you come in – please do come and say hi if you are passing.

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by the team at THRU-ZIM who undertake rigorous scientific research in challenging topics and settings. I've already been struck by the incredible skill set of the researchers here and am looking forward to learning a lot from you all.

Why is your profession important, and what do you enjoy most about it?

I work as an infectious diseases doctor in the UK – I find it a challenging role but an important one as infections can be hard to diagnose and treatment, and getting it right can lead to patients recovering quicker and with better outcomes. For me, I enjoy hearing patients stories and getting to the bottom of difficult complicated cases – it can be just like detective work at times which is fun.

I am contactable on my Bristol University email qe24407@bristol.ac.uk



Angus de Wilton

WELCOME TO OUR NEW INTERNS!

We are happy to welcome Tariro Hapazari and Daisy Gatsi, who joined us on 23rd July 2024 as administration interns. Tariro is working for THRU ZIM, while Daisy is attached to the Neotree Project. You can find them seated across from each other at the front office.

As interns, they are enjoying the opportunity to learn from coworkers, explore the office environment, and participate in team activities. Every day brings new experiences that help them grow and connect with the various teams.

Let's support them as they continue to learn and contribute!



TARIRO



DAISY

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UCL's Global Engagement Funds (GEF) 2024/25

We are delighted to announce that Alex Bradbury has been awarded UCL's Global Engagement Funds (GEF) 2024/25 small grant for his project titled "How 'Healthy Ageing' is perceived by older adults living in retirement villages and care homes in Zimbabwe." This research aims to guide future initiatives on social prescribing in Sub-Saharan Africa, contributing valuable insights into the health and well-being of older adults in the region.

PUBLICATIONS

Cardiovascular health in people with perinatally acquired HIV - where do we stand?

Majonga ED, Henderson M, Ferrand RA. *Curr Opin HIV AIDS*. 2024 Jun 27. doi: 10.1097/COH.0000000000000872. Online ahead of print

Interdisciplinary perspectives on multimorbidity in Africa: Developing an expanded conceptual model: Dixon J, Morton B, Nkhata MJ, Silman A, Simiyu IG, Spencer SA, et al. (2024) Interdisciplinary perspectives on multimorbidity in Africa: Developing an expanded conceptual model. *PLOS Glob Public Health* 4(7): e0003434. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0003434>

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THANK YOU!