

# SAFETP UNVEILS A NEW COHORT OF PUBLIC HEALTH SPECIALISTS



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## WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA?



**Mazvita Sengayi-Muchengeti** · 1st  
Head of Department at National Cancer Registry  
2w · 🌐

Honouring cancer survivors  
Remembering those we have lost to cancer

#CancerSurvivorsDay

**CANSA The Cancer Association of South Africa** Belinda Wagner Judith Mwansa-Kambafwile

**National Institute for Communicable Diseases...**  
40,323 followers  
2w · 🌐

Today we stood together, as cancer survivors, supporters, and advocates, to unveil a symbol of strength and solidarity. The ribbon statue now stands as a powerful reminder: ...more

+12

**NokuzolaMbhele** @Nokuzola... · 2025/05/15  
NICD?! 😂.....message received

**NICD** @nicd\_sa · 2025/05/15

No, my guy, your throat is not dry cause it's Thirsty Thursday. Could be more than just the dryness – maybe the flu's making its rounds!

Don't hold back, share your feels and let's keep tabs on that flu bug together!  
coughwatchsa.org.za

**Global Virus Network** @Globo... · 2025/05/29 ...

#GVNCenterHighlight @nicd\_sa is South Africa's national reference center for infectious diseases and a Global Virus Network Center of Excellence. With BSL-3 & Africa's only BSL-4 lab, NICD leads research, diagnostics & outbreak response across the continent.

#GVN #globalhealth



### Meet Our Editorial Team

Athenkosi Mjobo | Koketso Matjane | Laura De Almeida | Mandy Tsotetsi | Nande Mbanga | Siyabonga Mbatha | Vuyo Sabani





Prof.  
Adrian Puren

## MESSAGE FROM **THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Colleagues,

The South Africa Field Epidemiology Training Programme (SAFETP), which was established in 2006, continues to play a critical role in strengthening the country's epidemiological capacity. SAFETP has largely endured to this date because of the commitment of our partners: the National Department of Health, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Universities of Pretoria and Witwatersrand.

In May, the 2023 SAFETP cohort completed its two-year residency at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). In this issue, we reflect on the SAFETP programme, focusing on the completion ceremony and talking to SAFETP residents about their journey through the programme and their aspirations. We also profile SAFETP alumna Ms Refilwe Mokgetle, who currently leads public health at the Gauteng Department of Health.

To date, SAFETP has trained more than 141 graduates in the Advanced tier, 52 Intermediate trainees, 450 Frontline trainees across various provinces, and over 60 health professionals in the Southern African Development

Community region, equipping them with practical skills in applied epidemiology. SAFETP has also successfully assisted Eswatini, Malawi and Lesotho to start their own Frontline programmes.

June marks Cancer Survivors Month. In support of national awareness efforts, the National Cancer Registry, in collaboration with partners, hosted a nationwide awareness campaign (31 May – 2 June) in selected malls in major cities, including Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, East London, and Mbombela.

This edition also highlights the launch of tier three of the ADVANCE GERMS-SA study. This study investigates the causes of severe illness in adults with advanced HIV who are admitted to a hospital in South Africa.

We trust you will enjoy these and many more stories in this issue of our quarterly newsletter.

**Enjoy the read!**

# No need to panic about the new COVID-19 variant

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) has assured the public that there is no need to panic regarding the new COVID-19 variant recently reported in parts of Asia. The newly identified SARS-CoV-2 variant, NB.1.8.1 (Nimbus), is an Omicron-descendent lineage derived from the recombinant variant XDV.1.5.1. It was first detected in January 2025 in Asia and was designated a variant under monitoring by the World Health Organization on 23 May 2025. The Nimbus variant is increasing in prevalence globally, from 2.5% of

sequences submitted to the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data in epidemiological week 14 of 2025 (31 March to 6 April 2025) to 10.7% in epidemiological week 17 of 2025 (21 to 27 April 2025). As of 18 May 2025, it has been detected in 22 countries and has been associated with an increase in SARS-CoV-2 infections in parts of Asia. As of June 2025, the NB.1.8.1 variant has not been detected in South Africa, although SARS-CoV-2 testing throughout the country is limited, and few specimens are being submitted for sequencing. [Read more here.](#)



## UN lauds NICD for providing training on weapons of mass destruction

The United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs has expressed gratitude and lauded the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) for providing a basic training course for experts on the roster of the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism (UNSGM) for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons.

One of the key elements of the UNSGM, which was established under General Assembly resolution 42/37C and endorsed by Security Council resolution 620 (1988), is the roster of qualified experts and the training programme for these experts.

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your organisation's support for this training course, which assists the work of the United Nations to promote

international peace and security. The National Institute for Communicable Diseases deserves recognition for implementing the course programme and for the hospitality extended to the participants," said the global body in a letter to the NICD Executive Director, Prof. Adrian Puren. The course is provided by the NICD's Regional Diagnostic Demonstration Centre (RDDC).

Between 2022 and June 2025, the RDDC has provided training to 71 experts from 40 countries worldwide. "The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to continue its excellent cooperation with the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and the Government of South Africa, to ensure that the experts on the roster are properly trained to carry out such investigations in an objective manner and based on scientific methods," added the UN.



*SAFETP graduates stand proudly with their mentors and dignitaries during the completion ceremony in Kempton Park, May 2025.*

# SAFETP unveils a new cohort of public health specialists

By Laura De Almeida

In May of this year, the 2023 South African Field Epidemiology Training Programme (SAFETP) cohort completed its two-year residency at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). This group comprised students registered for a Master of Science in Epidemiology and Biostatistics at either the University of Pretoria or the University of the Witwatersrand.

At the completion ceremony held in Kempton Park, Gauteng, Professor Singilizwe Moko, the SAFETP Advisory Committee Chairperson, said: "SAFETP strengthens public health capacity by producing skilled epidemiologists who lead surveillance, outbreak response, and evidence-based decision-making. Combining rigorous training with practical experience, the programme builds competencies and supports underserved communities."

The Gauteng MEC for Health, Ms Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, who was one of the dignitaries in attendance, commended the SAFETP programme for increasing the pool of epidemiologists and biostatisticians in the country, adding that the increase in the number of epidemiologist bodes well for outbreak and disease preparedness.

Since its establishment in 2006, SAFETP has been vital in increasing epidemiology skills across the country and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SAFETP offers a three-tiered training programme – Frontline (3 months), Intermediate (9 months), and Advanced (2 years) – tailored to professionals at different career stages. To date, SAFETP has trained more than 141 graduates in the Advanced tier, 52 Intermediate trainees, 450 Frontline trainees across various provinces, and over 60 health professionals in the SADC region, equipping

them with practical skills in applied epidemiology. SAFETP has also successfully assisted Eswatini, Malawi and Lesotho to start their Frontline programmes.

Reflecting on the future of SAFETP, Prof. Moko, who is also the Chief Director of Strategy for the Eastern Cape Department of Health, said: "I hope SAFETP continues to develop skilled epidemiologists in underserved areas like the Eastern Cape, strengthening health systems, reducing disparities, and improving community well-being."

As SAFETP grows, its legacy endures – a proven model preparing South Africa and the region for a healthier, more resilient future.

## About the SAFETP Programme

The SAFETP competency-based training programme was initiated in 2006 through a collaboration between the South African National Department of Health, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, a division of the National Health Laboratory Service, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC), to increase South Africa's field epidemiological capacity. SAFETP uses an established applied epidemiology curriculum, providing an accredited Master of Science (MSc) degree through the University of Pretoria and the University of the Witwatersrand, combined with mentored practical field experience. The programme has trained more than 140 graduates in various sectors, including the private sector, public health institutes, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the US CDC, and the WHO. Click [here](#) to read more about SAFETP.





*Mr Moiane and Ms Dlamini, 2025 SAFETP graduates, are grateful to be part of the programme and have set their sights on long and exciting careers in public health.*

# SAFETP residents reflect on their journey and future in public health

By Vuyo Sabani

Mr Thulani Moiane developed an interest in public health while working as a nutritionist in Ehlanzeni District in Mpumalanga. A social media advertisement calling for applications to the 2023 cohort of the South Africa Field Epidemiology Training Programme (SAFETP) set the wheels in motion. He applied and was accepted into the programme. In May this year, Mr Moiane joined fellow graduates at the SAFETP completion ceremony, which was attended by dignitaries, including Gauteng Health MEC, Ms Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko.

“During my appointment as a nutritionist, I worked directly with communities to prevent diseases and promote healthy living. I developed a keen interest in public health, epidemiology, and biostatistics. That curiosity motivated me to pursue field epidemiology,” said Mr Moiane proudly. Another graduate, Ms Sinothando Dlamini, who began her career as a clinical associate working in clinical care, says population-level health and data’s impact in shaping public health decisions drew her interest in the SAFETP programme.

“This shift in passion from individual patient care to large-scale health interventions led me to join SAFETP, where I could gain hands-on training in field epidemiology and contribute meaningfully to public health,” said Ms Dlamini. Adding that she was driven by a desire to make a broader impact beyond the bedside. “I saw how data could be used not just for reporting, but for improving

health outcomes and informing policy, especially in underserved communities. Field epidemiology offered the opportunity to combine my clinical knowledge with data skills to address health problems on a larger scale,” said Ms Dlamini.

Reflecting on the impact of the SAFETP, Mr Moiane said: “The programme plays a vital role in training future field epidemiologists to protect the public from health threats and contributes to knowledge generation through research.” Ms Dlamini shared these sentiments, stating that SAFETP provided her with a solid foundation in epidemiological thinking, research, and data analysis. “It also gave me the opportunity to connect with other public health professionals and mentors who continue to influence my career. The programme prepared me for research and public health roles with a deeper understanding of evidence-based action.”

Looking ahead, Ms Dlamini plans to continue working in research and public health data to support evidence-based policies, particularly in resource-limited settings. “I’m also passionate about teaching and mentoring others in public health. SAFETP laid the foundation for this path and gave me the skills and confidence to pursue it further,” she said. Mr Moiane also has ambitious plans. He intends to pursue a PhD in public health and continue contributing by training the next generation of field epidemiologists.

# HOW THE SAFETP

Programme **empowered** me for my role in public health

Ms Refilwe Mokgetle, Acting Chief Director for Health Programmes at the Gauteng Department of Health and a member of the 2009 SAFETP cohort, reflects on her journey through the programme and how it empowered her career in public health. Interview by Vuyo Sabani

**The SAFETP programme empowered me in many ways and gave me a broader understanding of public health.** One key output of the programme is scientific writing, which includes preparing abstracts and making presentations at conferences. This has prepared me for public speaking, facilitating strategic meetings, and making informed decisions. Through SAFETP, I developed a wide range of skills from epidemiology and data analysis to operational planning, financial management, programme monitoring and evaluation, training and development, supervision, and stakeholder engagement.

**The knowledge I gained during the programme continues to inform my work today.** I apply it in areas such as disease surveillance, pandemic preparedness, and the development of strategic tools and plans, such as the Strategic Tool for Assessing Risks (STAR), in preparation for the International Health Regulations. My SAFETP experience also enables me to supervise residents in the programme and mentor junior colleagues.

**Some of the most impactful projects I have led since completing the programme** include managing outbreak response teams during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Listeriosis outbreak, as well as



strengthening public health surveillance systems. When I was appointed Director for Public Health in Gauteng in February 2020, right as the COVID-19 pandemic began, there was no time for orientation. I had to hit the ground running. The knowledge and skills I gained from SAFETP enabled me to lead the provincial response effectively and coordinate stakeholders at a critical time, as Gauteng was the epicentre.

**To current SAFETP fellows who aspire to make a meaningful impact:** you are privileged to be part of a world-class programme that is internationally recognised and

implemented in many countries. The knowledge and skills you acquire are truly transformative and evident in South Africa's public health landscape. SAFETP is demanding, and success requires hard work and dedication, but don't give up.

**I remain forever grateful for the opportunity to have been part of this programme.** I will continue to apply what I have learned and support SAFETP, just as my mentors supported me. I am proud to be an alumnus and hope the programme continues to build public health capacity for years to come.

# Cancer Survivors Month

Taking awareness to the heart of communities



The head of NCR, Dr Muchengeti (far left) and Ms Wagner (far right) joined by the Groenwald family at the launch of the Cancer Survivors Month at the NICD.

By Siyabonga Mbatha

The National Cancer Registry (NCR), based at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, marked Cancer Survivors Month – observed annually in June – with a massive public awareness drive. The campaign, which took place between 30 May and 2 June, saw the NCR, along with various partners, including Old Mutual Property, Living with Cancer SA, and the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), join forces to raise awareness about cancer through activations at malls across the country.

The campaign launched with the unveiling of a ribbon statue at the NICD. This installation served as a lasting symbol of resilience and unity. From there, the #YourCancerCounts initiative moved into malls nationwide, bringing information, support and survivor stories directly to the public.

At the launch, Dr Mazvita Muchengeti, Head of the NCR, said: “It is important to commemorate survivors and provide a space for those who have lost loved ones to reflect and remember.” Ms Belinda Wagner, founder of Living with Cancer SA, who started the organisation

in 2017 after being diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, echoed these sentiments.

“Cancer Survivors Month is more than a celebration – it is a call to recognise every life touched by cancer.

This initiative gives voice to the silent strength of survivors, the enduring love of families, and the memories of those we have lost. Through this partnership with the NCR, we are not only honouring journeys of survival but also igniting awareness, advocacy, and action for a better future in cancer care,” said Ms Wagner.

The activation took place at Gateway in Durban, Cavendish Square in Cape Town, Vincent Park in East London, Bedford Centre, Phumulani Mall in Tembisa, Kagiso Mall on the West Rand, and the Zone in Rosebank in Gauteng, as well as Riverside Mall in Mpumalanga. At every activation, volunteers engaged with visitors, distributed resources and created space for open conversations about cancer. Talks were hosted daily and focused on early detection, emotional support, and accurate data collection.

**“It is important to commemorate survivors and provide a space for those who have lost loved ones to reflect and remember.”**

The logo for ADVANCE GERMS-SA features a stylized blue figure on the left, resembling a person or a microorganism, with the word "GERMS" in large, blue, textured letters above "SOUTH AFRICA" in smaller, blue, textured letters.

# GERMS

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Surveillance and investigation of severe bacterial and fungal infections among hospitalised patients with advanced HIV disease in South Africa

By Dr Rachel Wake and Prof. Olga Perovic

ADVANCE GERMS-SA is a three-tiered cohort study investigating the causes of severe illness in adults with advanced HIV disease (AHD) who are admitted to hospital in South Africa. Tier 1 is leveraging national population-level data from the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS), the GERMS-SA surveillance platform, and the NICD's Centre for Tuberculosis to construct a retrospective cohort of patients with HIV over the past 5 years. Tier 2 involves retrospective surveillance of HIV-positive patients admitted to medical wards at Helen Joseph and Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospitals. In May, we launched Tier 3, a prospective cohort of patients with advanced HIV disease (AHD), contributing diagnostic samples and 6-month follow-up data.

The launch event brought together our core and site study teams, with collaborators from the NICD. Prof. Nelesh Govender (Chief Investigator) reminded us of the importance of our focus, particularly in light of recent US government cuts to aid and research funding in South Africa, which is likely to lead to an increase in AIDS-related deaths. Dr Rachel Wake (co-PI) shared preliminary findings of the study, which has enrolled >500 patients living with HIV to date. Around half of patients with HIV admitted to medical units have AHD. These patients were more likely to have severe infections and to die (in-hospital mortality ~1/5) during admission than patients with non-advanced HIV. Tier 3 will give us the opportunity to investigate the causes of severe infection and death in this population, as well as identify diagnostics with the greatest yield and potential protective interventions.



ADVANCE GERMS-SA Tier 3 launch meeting

Taken together, this 3-tiered approach will generate a complete picture of the contributions of pathogenic bacteria, fungi and viruses to severe illness among patients with AHD (CD4 count <200 cells/ $\mu$ L) - using broad brushstrokes at a national level and more granular analyses at the local level. ADVANCE GERMS-SA will also provide a comparison of severe illness among in-patients living with HIV who have higher CD4 cell counts (>350 cells/ $\mu$ L). Additionally, in-depth laboratory analyses of pathogenic bacteria and fungi causing sepsis among participants of Tiers 2 and 3 will facilitate investigation of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in relation to patient CD4 count and prior/current exposure to antibiotics. A novel and enhanced package of diagnostic assays will be applied to biological samples from participants with AHD - this will be used to investigate the additional diagnostic yield for identifying pathogens responsible for severe illness, which are not cultured or detected by routine microbiological tests.

The ADVANCE GERMS-SA team is a multi-disciplinary group including experts in infectious diseases, clinical microbiology, epidemiology, and pathogen diagnostics, with collaborators from the University of the Witwatersrand, the NHLS, NICD, and NICD's GERMS-SA. This ambitious project investigates the causes, including antimicrobial resistance, of severe bacterial and fungal infections in patients with advanced HIV disease. The findings will help inform targeted interventions to reduce HIV-related illness and death.



The ADVANCE GERMS-SA team at the project launch on 11 November 2024.

# CEZPD opens its doors for an inspiring World Malaria Day commemoration

By Bhavani Moodley

In honour of World Malaria Day on 25 April, the Centre for Emerging Zoonotic and Parasitic Diseases (CEZPD) transformed its labs into a dynamic hub of discovery and learning!

The CEZPD welcomed staff from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) to an exclusive Open Day, offering a rare behind-the-scenes look into the cutting-edge work being done to address malaria. Through interactive exhibits, vibrant posters, and hands-on displays, guests had the chance to engage with the science and meet the brilliant minds driving innovation in malaria research.

One of the highlights? A specially designed educational crossword puzzle is both fun and informative! For those who couldn't attend in person, the puzzle was also made available online to ensure everyone had a chance to take part.

A huge thank you to all the participants and organisers who helped make the day a memorable success. Together, we continue to raise awareness and inspire action in the fight against malaria.

**“Malaria Ends with Us: Reinvest, Reimagine, Reignite”.**





# Honouring Zibusiso Masuku: A legacy of safer science and empowered people

Mr Zibusiso Masuku (standing third from right) with DBB colleagues.



Bidding "Captain Zi" farewell



Team alignment activity with the DBB Team

By the DBB Team, Nande Mbanga

Zibusiso "Zi" Masuku has dedicated his career to strengthening Africa's biosafety and biosecurity landscape. Under his leadership, over 1,000 professionals from 35 countries were trained in biosafety, biosecurity, and biocontainment. He didn't just teach—he built capacity, instilled confidence, and empowered professionals across human, animal, and environmental health sectors to lead with courage and responsibility.

Zi was instrumental in establishing certification programmes and specialised curricula in high-containment engineering, biorisk management, and biosafety cabinet certification, laying down pipelines of excellence to safeguard the continent for generations to come.

His leadership, marked by humility and inclusivity, created spaces where people could grow, lead, and thrive. He mentored generously, championed young talent, and redefined leadership as service and transformation.

As he takes on his next chapter, Zi carries with him the hopes of a continent—prepared, united, and safer because of his life's work.

With deep respect and gratitude,  
Your NICD and DBB family

# Training & Development



Six participants from South Sudan, two from the Africa CDC, and four CHARM presenters and mentors.



Eight participants received certificates of attendance, alongside two presenters from NICD and NHLS.



Professor Perovic from CHARM with Ms Fowzia Mohamed Sheikh of the Africa CDC.

## CHARM hosts South Sudan and Africa CDC for advanced AMR surveillance training

From 12–16 May 2025, the Centre for Healthcare-Associated Infections, Antimicrobial Resistance and Mycoses (CHARM) at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) hosted AMR surveillance system training for six delegates from South Sudan's and two from the Africa CDC. This marks the third country visit to CHARM, reinforcing the NICD's role as a continental leader in infectious disease surveillance. AMR surveillance activities were showcased during the sessions, held at the Regional Diagnostic Demonstration Centre (RDCC).

AMR is a major public health threat in Africa, requiring a coordinated, multi-sectoral response. As a WHO Collaborating Centre, CHARM plays a key role in mentoring and strengthening AMR programmes, lab capacity, diagnostics, and antimicrobial stewardship.

As part of ongoing efforts to address and overcome AMR, the Africa CDC supported a study visit by South Sudan to South Africa. The visit aimed to build capacity through knowledge exchange, showcase best practices in AMR surveillance, strengthen lab capabilities, promote regional collaboration, and advance the One Health approach by integrating data across human, animal, and environmental health sectors.

South Sudan's visit aimed to strengthen AMR response by enhancing understanding of National Action Plan implementation, building lab capacity, establishing M&E systems, and connecting with AMR experts across Africa.



# Training & Development



## Reflections on the six-month GOARN Berlin Fellowship.

By Wellington Maruma

I recently completed a six-month GOARN Fellowship based in Berlin, Germany, hosted by the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence and the Robert Koch Institute. The fellowship significantly strengthened my technical, analytical, and coordination skills in epidemic intelligence, with direct impact on my home institution, the NICD.

Key outputs included enhancing data analytics capacity using R/RStudio and GIS, improving cholera surveillance systems through real-time reporting, and learning systems to integrate event-based surveillance within national IDSR frameworks. I also facilitated a national workshop focused on epidemic intelligence, covering digital tools, outbreak detection, and disease modelling. Additionally, I completed advanced AppliedEpi courses on RMarkdown reporting and GIS for applied epidemiology, improving our data workflows and reporting efficiencies.

The fellowship has significantly improved my data management workflows by introducing automation, efficiency, and reproducibility. I developed customised

scripts for key surveillance reports, including the Annual Cholera Report, Monthly NMCSS Reports, and DHIS indicator summaries for programme managers. These tools are streamlining reporting, reducing manual processes, and enhancing the timeliness of epidemiological outputs.

From a professional development standpoint, the fellowship has been transformative, expanding my global network and elevating my role in strategic public health initiatives. I am proud to now be part of the GOARN Alumni Network and look forward to continuing this journey at the upcoming alumni meeting in June 2025 in Berlin, where we will advance collaboration and knowledge exchange in epidemic intelligence.

The fellowship provided valuable international exposure through participation in the GOARN Tier 1.5 Training, WHO Speaker Series, and major public health conferences, including ESCAIDE and the European Public Health Conference. These engagements broadened my perspective and supported stakeholder collaboration for enhanced outbreak preparedness.

# ACHIEVEMENTS

## National Cancer Registry honoured for advancing Cancer surveillance in sub-Saharan Africa



National Cancer Registry team, honoured by Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg for advancing cancer surveillance in sub-Saharan Africa.

The National Cancer Registry (NCR) was honoured by Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg for its significant contributions to enhancing cancer surveillance in sub-Saharan Africa. The award was presented by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Heike Kielstein, during an event held in Halle, Germany, on 20 May 2025. This recognition was awarded under the Network for Oncology Research in Africa project, specifically for Research Task One, which focuses on strengthening cancer surveillance in sub-Saharan Africa.

As part of this initiative, the NCR has conducted training across several African countries on probabilistic record linkage of cervical cancer screening records with cancer registry data. This technical work is crucial for enabling countries to monitor progress towards the World Health Organisation's global goal of eliminating cervical cancer as a public health issue. In recognition of its leadership and expertise in this field, the NCR was officially designated as an IARC-GICR Centre of Expertise for sub-Saharan Africa by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in 2022 and by the National Cancer Institute's Centre for Global Health (NCI-CGH) in 2023. This designation underscores the NCR's pivotal role in supporting cancer registries across the continent through technical training and collaborative research.

**"This award is a testament to what can be achieved when passionate individuals unite with a shared vision. It inspires us to continue pushing boundaries and to persist in our efforts for meaningful change in our communities,"** stated Sizeka Mashele, who has been part of the NCR's leadership in this initiative on behalf of Dr Mazvita Muchengeti.

## Celebrating Monalisa Kalimashe's MPH Achievement!

Congratulations to Ms Monalisa Kalimashe on earning her Master of Public Health from the University of the Western Cape! Her research explored diabetes trends among people living with HIV in the Northern Cape (2018–2022), supervised by Dr Tendesayi Kufa, Dr Brett Mansfield, and Prof. Olagoke Akintola.

Ms Kalimashe, a medical scientist at the Centre for HIV and STI at the NICD, recently represented the institute at two major global forums: the International Diabetes Epidemiology Group (IDEG) and the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) World Diabetes Congress 2025, held in Bangkok, Thailand. There, she shared findings from her dissertation, highlighting the integration of diabetes screening into HIV care—a timely contribution as global health systems face rising rates of non-communicable diseases. Her participation helped strengthen international collaboration around diabetes prevention, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

