



ONEHEALTH

APPROACH



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Athenkosi
Mjobo



Laura
De Almeida



Vuyo
Sabani



Mandy
Tsotetsi



Nande
Mbanga



Siyabonga
Mbatha



Prof. Nazir Ismail

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On 3 November annually, the global community comes together to commemorate One Health Day, which highlights the importance of a One Health approach in addressing shared health threats that affect humans, animals and the environment.

One Health is a holistic, integrated and unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals and environment. At its core is the recognition that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and the wider environment, including ecosystems, are closely linked and interdependent. The dynamic nature of infectious diseases at the human–animal–environment interface has been demonstrated repeatedly, with profound impacts on public health. HIV/AIDS, Ebola and COVID-19 are prominent examples of diseases with zoonotic origins or transmission pathways that illustrate the intersection between human and animal health. HIV/AIDS has had an enormous and sustained impact on morbidity and mortality, particularly in Africa; COVID-19 evolved into a global pandemic with unprecedented health, social and economic consequences; and Ebola outbreaks, including those seen in recent years, have placed substantial pressure on health systems and resulted in high mortality.

In this issue, the team delves deeper into the One Health approach and puts the spotlight on some of the initiatives the NICD has been involved in to raise awareness and strengthen collaboration across sectors.

One such initiative is the One Health Avian Influenza Simulation Exercise, led by the NICD's Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis in collaboration with various stakeholders, including the World Health Organization South Africa Office, the national Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture. The exercise brought together the human, animal and environmental health sectors to strengthen preparedness and cross-sectoral coordination. The outcomes of the simulation exercise directly support South Africa's commitments under

the International Health Regulations (2005) and contribute to the country's National Action Plan for Health Security priorities.

At the NICD, we believe strongly in collaboration and knowledge sharing across Africa. I am proud to share that the NICD has been appointed as a regional Wastewater Surveillance Hub by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). As a regional hub, the NICD will share its expertise with countries across the Southern African Development Community and beyond, supporting Africa CDC's vision to expand the implementation and public health impact of wastewater and environmental surveillance across African Union Member States.

Our commitment to strengthening public health capacity also extends to biosafety and biosecurity, which must increasingly be considered through a One Health lens, recognising the interconnected risks across human, animal and environmental health. The NICD's Division of Biosafety and Biosecurity works with various stakeholders to strengthen capacity and knowledge in these critical areas. In this issue, we highlight some of the training initiatives undertaken by the Division over the past few months.

These include the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism Fifth Annual Beginner Training Course, conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and supported by the Institute for International Criminal Investigations and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security.

These stories demonstrate the value of collaboration, knowledge sharing and coordinated action in strengthening our collective ability to protect public health. I invite you to read more about these and other initiatives featured in this issue.

Until the next issue, take care!

Prof. Nazir Ismail



SOUTH AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO RABIES IS A POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF ONE HEALTH IN ACTION

Dr Jacqueline Weyer, Head of the NICD's Centre for Emerging Zoonotic and Parasitic Diseases, highlights South Africa's response to rabies as a powerful example of the One Health approach.

By Nande Mbanga

The One Health approach recognises that human health cannot be separated from the health of animals and the environment. This collaborative approach strengthens early detection, preparedness and coordinated responses to infectious disease threats associated with zoonotic and vector-borne diseases.

Dr Jacqueline Weyer, the head of the Centre for Emerging Zoonotic and Parasitic Diseases (CEZPD) at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), cites South Africa's response to rabies as a powerful example of One Health in action. Rabies does not belong to a single sector; preventing human deaths requires collaboration between veterinary services, public health authorities, laboratories, researchers and communities.

Through the National Rabies Advisory Group, multidisciplinary partners work towards the shared goal of "Zero Human Rabies due to Canine Rabies by 2030." Controlling rabies in animal populations, vaccinating dogs, managing human exposures, strengthening surveillance and promoting community awareness demonstrates how protecting animal health can directly protect human health.

Dr Weyer says the One Health approach is fundamental to protecting public health in an increasingly interconnected world.

This interconnectedness is particularly significant in South Africa, with its diverse ecosystems, extensive livestock and

wildlife populations, and movement of people, animals and goods across communities and borders. The NICD has supported One Health-centred research for many years, contributing scientific evidence to better understand health threats at the human–animal–environment interface.

"South Africa needs to remain prepared for infectious diseases that can emerge or re-emerge at the interface between people, animals and the environment. Preparedness should not begin only when an outbreak occurs; it must be built into our routine public health systems," says Dr Weyer.

Looking ahead, Dr Weyer said they are focused on strengthening partnerships, multidisciplinary research, information sharing and capacity development so that One Health becomes embedded in everyday public health practice. She added that they are also examining how climate change could influence infectious disease risks. In collaboration with the University of Warwick and the National Public Health Institute of Mozambique, the team is studying arbovirus risks in the Maputaland Ecoregion, a shared ecological region between South Africa and Mozambique. By combining data on mosquito vectors, pathogens, wildlife interactions, and climate projections, the research aims to model future arbovirus emergence and inform preparedness.

"Through collaboration, we can develop more coordinated and sustainable approaches to protecting the health of our people, animals and environment," concluded Dr Weyer.



Dr Nicole Wolter says a coordinated, multisectoral response is essential to detect and contain zoonotic threats before they escalate.

South Africa tests it's One Health readiness against Avian Influenza

By Vuyo Sabani

Is South Africa ready to respond to a zoonotic outbreak, such as avian influenza, which may affect both animal and human health? This is important because about 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, originating in animals and crossing into humans. It is against this background that the One Health Avian Influenza Simulation Exercise (SimEx) was conducted in June 2026 in Pretoria. Led by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) in collaboration with the national Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture, the exercise brought together around 75 participants from across the human, animal, and environmental health sectors.

Since 2017, multiple highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks have occurred in wild and domestic birds across sub-Saharan Africa, causing major losses in the poultry industry. "The first HPAI subtype H5N1 outbreak in South Africa occurred in commercial layer chickens in 2021, and this subtype has since caused repeated waves of infection in poultry and wild birds across multiple provinces, with ongoing transmission documented in coastal seabirds in the Western Cape and sporadic outbreaks in poultry." While there have been no confirmed human avian influenza cases in South Africa to date, sporadic human cases have been reported in other countries and the risk that these viruses adapt to human infection and transmission carries pandemic potential.

The SimEx tested cross-sectoral communication, reporting and coordination, laboratory specimen and data sharing, surveillance systems, investigation and response activation; highlighting strengths to be leveraged and gaps to be addressed. The outputs from the SimEx directly support South Africa's commitments under the International Health Regulations of 2005 and South Africa's National Action Plan for Health Security priorities. The exercise builds on existing frameworks while trying to address gaps in cross-sectoral coordination. Its success will be measured by the implementation of the recommendations that follow, and the stronger collaborative relationships forged across the human-animal-environment interface.

Dr Nicole Wolter, who led the organising team from the NICD, said the One Health approach was critical for managing outbreaks that cut across human and animal health, because "a coordinated, multisectoral response is essential to detect and contain zoonotic threats before they escalate". Dr Wolter further expressed gratitude to all participants and urged them to promote the One Health Approach in their respective fields, as this would ensure better coordination during outbreaks and an improved response when most needed.

CLIMATE, TRAVEL AND DISEASE: THE CHANGING MAP OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES



By Siyabonga Mbatha

The ongoing Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda are a reminder that infectious diseases remain an ever-present global threat. While outbreaks may appear isolated, climate change, international travel, urbanisation and environmental change are reshaping where diseases emerge and how they spread. At the same time, advances in surveillance are helping public health agencies detect outbreaks earlier and respond more effectively.

According to Mr Nevashan Govender, Head of the Emergency Operations Centre at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), infectious diseases are no longer confined to the regions where they were traditionally expected. "We can't rely on historical patterns anymore," he says. "We have to assume that any country could potentially be affected by diseases occurring elsewhere in the world."

This shift is evident in vector-borne diseases such as dengue, chikungunya and malaria, which are expanding as changing temperatures and rainfall create more favourable conditions for mosquitoes. Cholera outbreaks following extreme weather events and zoonotic diseases such as mpox further illustrate how dynamic infectious disease risk has become.

Climate change, however, is only one piece of a much larger puzzle. Mr Govender explains that population growth, urbanisation, environmental degradation, land-use change and international travel are creating new opportunities for diseases to emerge and spread. He adds that improved laboratory capacity, genomic sequencing and public health intelligence mean "we're becoming

much better at finding" outbreaks that may previously have gone undetected.

Global travel has transformed public health intelligence. An infected traveller can board a flight before symptoms develop and arrive in another country within hours. "Preparedness today is just as much about understanding what's happening globally as it is about monitoring what's happening locally," says Mr Govender.

Over the past five years, South Africa has investigated imported cases of Lassa fever, dengue, mpox, hantavirus and malaria. Mr Govender says these cases demonstrate that surveillance systems are working, with clinicians recognising unusual illnesses, laboratories confirming diagnoses rapidly and public health teams responding quickly to minimise onward transmission.

Surveillance has also evolved. Traditional epidemiology is now complemented by genomic sequencing, event-based surveillance and digital disease intelligence. As Mr Govender explains, the goal is "to detect potential threats early enough to prevent larger outbreaks."

Preparedness remains central to the NICD's work. Although South Africa has not experienced local Ebola transmission, the Institute maintains laboratory readiness, surveillance systems and emergency response plans while supporting neighbouring countries through training and technical assistance. As Mr Govender reminds us, "Infectious diseases don't recognise borders, so improving preparedness across the region ultimately strengthens South Africa's own health security."

...The goal is
"to detect potential threats early enough to prevent larger outbreaks."



Delegates from African countries attending the Technical Assistance Partnership for Wastewater and Environmental Surveillance Training Programme in Johannesburg in July 2026.

AFRICA CDC APPOINTS THE NICD WASTEWATER SURVEILLANCE HUB

By Staff writer

The appointment of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) as a regional Wastewater Surveillance Hub (WES) by the Africa Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), is a significant recognition of the Institute's leadership in wastewater surveillance on the African continent.

This is a view of Dr Mukhlid Yousif, Co-director for Wastewater Genomics Syndicate at the NICD's Centre for Vaccines and Immunology. "For the Wastewater Genomics Syndicate, this appointment represents both recognition and responsibility. It acknowledges the dedication, innovation, and scientific excellence that have shaped the NICD's wastewater surveillance programme over the past five years, while reinforcing the Institute's commitment to supporting countries across Africa in strengthening wastewater surveillance capacity," said Dr Yousif.

The appointment further positions the NICD as a trusted regional partner in advancing wastewater and environmental surveillance and promoting the use of genomics to improve public health across the continent.

The appointment of the NICD as the regional Hub follows the launch of the Africa CDC Continental Wastewater and Environmental Surveillance Strategy, which aims to establish WES as a core component of public health and environmental monitoring across the African Union Member States. According to Dr Yousif, WES offers a non-invasive, cost-effective, and scalable approach for detecting population-level health threats, including circulating and emerging pathogens and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) markers.

As a regional hub, the NICD will share this expertise with countries across the Southern African Development Community and beyond, supporting Africa CDC's vision to expand the implementation and public health impact of WES across African Union Member States.

"Under this hub-and-spoke model, regional hubs provide advanced molecular detection and quantification of pathogens from wastewater, genomic sequencing, complex data analysis and interpretation, quality assurance, and technical capacity strengthening to support national surveillance programmes," added Dr Yousif.



Ms Nikki Reddy, Grants Finance Manager at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).

NIKKI REDDY'S JOURNEY BEYOND THE NUMBERS AND INTO PURPOSE

By Laura De Almeida

Numbers and spreadsheets may be at the heart of her role, but they are only part of what drives Ms Nikki Reddy at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). As a Chartered Global Management Accountant, Ms Reddy is naturally curious, analytical, and passionate about solving problems and finding better ways of doing things. But above all, she is driven by a genuine desire to help people and make a difference.

Ms Reddy's journey began at the National Health Laboratory Service, where she worked as a Grants Manager before taking time away to focus on her growing family and pursue other interests. In September 2024, she joined the NICD as the Grants Finance Manager, beginning a new chapter in her career. Drawn to the organisation's people, purpose, and opportunity to contribute to public health, she explains, "I wanted to be part of that journey and contribute in my own way." That same sense of purpose extends to the way she leads. Inspired by the people around her, particularly her team, she strives to create an environment where people feel supported and empowered to do their best. This is reflected in a saying that has stayed with her throughout her career: "People do not leave jobs; they leave managers." For Ms Reddy, this is a principle that has influenced the kind of leader she strives to be. Her experiences at the NICD have reinforced this people-centred approach, with the people around her serving as a constant source of inspiration and influence, whether through conversations, challenges, or simply observing how colleagues approach their work. More recently, Prof. Nazir Ismail has encouraged her to

challenge herself beyond the traditional boundaries of her role. "I value his drive to position the NICD for the recognition and impact it deserves, and I'm grateful to be part of that journey," she says.

Beyond her role, she is equally enthusiastic about the NICD's dynamic environment and the opportunity to work alongside knowledgeable colleagues. Her curiosity about the work happening around her even extends to the laboratory, although she jokes that she hasn't run a laboratory test herself – yet!

When reflecting on the legacy she would like to leave at the NICD, Ms Reddy returns to a theme that runs through her entire approach – people. She would like to be remembered as someone who recognised the human being behind every job title and someone who led and worked with empathy, compassion, and understanding. This people-centred approach has shaped her NICD journey, which she describes as "a journey of people, purpose, and possibility – challenging the status quo, learning every day, growing beyond my role, and building something I'm proud to be part of, while hopefully leaving things a little better than I found them."

More than a career, her journey reflects the way she approaches work, leadership, and life – with curiosity, compassion, humour, and a determination to make a difference – one person, one problem, and one improvement at a time.

REGIONAL DIAGNOSTIC DEMONSTRATION CENTRE



Participants of the South African National Biosafety and Biosecurity Technical Working Group (TWG) during the strategic workshop hosted by the NICD from 6–10 July 2026. The five-day workshop brought together 18 multisectoral stakeholders to strengthen national coordination, governance and strategic priorities for biosafety and biosecurity in South Africa.

NICD STRENGTHENING NATIONAL COORDINATION FOR BIOSAFETY AND BIOSECURITY

By Dr Anastasia Trataris-Rebisz

From 6 to 10 July 2026, the NICD hosted a strategic workshop of the South African National Biosafety and Biosecurity Technical Working Group (TWG). The five-day workshop brought together 18 participants to strengthen the governance, coordination and future direction of biosafety and biosecurity in South Africa.

The TWG is a national, multisectoral coordination mechanism that brings together expertise from government departments, public health and research institutions, laboratories, academia, regulatory stakeholders and technical partners. This broad representation is essential due to the inherent nature of biological risks extending across human, animal and environmental health and cannot be effectively managed by any single institution or sector.

The Committee's mandate is to provide coordinated technical guidance, support the development and harmonisation of national policies and regulatory frameworks, identify legislative and operational gaps, strengthen institutional oversight, and guide the implementation of national biosafety and biosecurity priorities. Its work contributes to South Africa's obligations under national legislation and international health and security frameworks, while supporting the country's capacity to prevent, detect and respond to biological risks.

During the workshop, members reviewed and updated the TWG Terms of Reference and advanced the National Biosafety and Biosecurity Strategic Plan for 2026–2030. The workshop also enabled members to review key national resources, including legislative guidelines for biosafety and biosecurity and guidance for the management of high-consequence agents and toxins. These outputs will support more consistent governance, clearer institutional responsibilities, stronger regulatory alignment and improved coordination across sectors.

The workshop benefited significantly from the support and co-facilitation of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). Its technical support, regional perspective and experience strengthened discussions and helped align the TWG's priorities with wider continental biosafety and biosecurity objectives.

Through sustained multisectoral collaboration, the TWG has the potential to shape a safer and more resilient national biological risk management system. Its work will strengthen laboratory safety and security, protect personnel and communities, and enhance South Africa's preparedness for naturally occurring, accidental and deliberate biological events.



DR LEIGH BERRIE

MEET THE **NEW HEAD** OF THE CENTRE FOR HIV AND STIs

Interview by Vuyo Sabani

Please tell us a bit about your background and career journey before joining the NICD.

I obtained my PhD in Molecular Biology from the University of the Witwatersrand in 2000 and then went on to do a postdoctoral degree at the University of Cape Town in 2001. My career began working for a number of commercial molecular diagnostic companies from 2002 to 2009, providing technical support and training in molecular diagnostics and genetic sequencing. In 2010, I moved into the public health sector, where I have held various roles at the NICD, National Health Laboratory Service National Priority Programmes, and more recently at the United States of America Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), managing and leading teams in strengthening HIV and TB laboratory services and systems both in South Africa and regionally.

What motivated you to join the NICD, and what excites you most about your role?

The NICD is a world-class institute and a leader in the field of HIV and STIs. As a public health institute, we have a responsibility to provide trustworthy scientific findings and to communicate effectively with the public, with the ultimate goal of promoting health and saving lives. With my background and diverse set of perspectives, including commercial, laboratory, donor and patient, I believe I can add value to the Centre for HIV and STIs and the institute

as a whole. I am excited and committed to strengthen the reputation of the Centre, align with needs and priorities of the South African government, strengthen health systems through collaboration and with evidence-based research, and ensure sustainability through transformation.

Are there any specific projects and/ or research studies you're eager to work on?

My interests lie in laboratory diagnostics, epidemiology and surveillance of HIV and associated diseases. I am eager to strengthen these areas through collaboration and the integration and alignment of information with the Department of Health to support effective programme monitoring and improve patient care. I look forward to ensuring the Centre's activities remain current and relevant and that our focus remains on achieving the game changers needed to reach the last mile in the HIV programme's goals.

How do you unwind when you are not working?

To unwind from work, my go-to is walking/hiking. I love to go on long walks in the surrounding country side on weekends, and otherwise spending time with family and friends. As a hobby, I studied through the Cape Wine Academy and I am a qualified Cape Wine Master, one of only 117 in the country.



NICD staff with items donated to COMPASS as part of the organisation's Nelson Mandela Day initiative.

NICD HANDS OVER NELSON MANDELA DAY DONATIONS TO COMPASS



By Vuyo Sabani

As part of its Nelson Mandela Day initiative, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) donated toiletries, sanitary pads, clothing and other essential items to COMPASS, an NGO based in Edenvale that provides support to and empowers women and children who have experienced abuse. During the handover, which took place in early August, Dr Leigh Berrie, who led the NICD delegation, highlighted the importance of supporting organisations that make a difference in their communities.

"As the NICD community, we chose to support COMPASS because we believe your work has a profound impact on the lives of those affected by gender-based violence. We also recognise the dedication and resilience it takes to sustain a non-profit organisation in an increasingly challenging funding environment," said Dr Berrie, who heads the NICD's Centre for HIV and STIs.

Ms Fiona Pickett, COMPASS manager, expressed her gratitude to the NICD for the contribution, adding that the donated items would support the various programmes and services provided by the NGO.

Mandela Day is an annual global observance, officially recognised by the United Nations, that takes place on 18

July to honour the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela. The day is a call to action for individuals, communities and organisations to reflect on Mandela's values and principles and take meaningful steps to make a positive impact in their communities.



Ms Fiona Pickett (in an orange blouse) of COMPASS with NICD staff during the handover of donated items in Edenvale.



Antimicrobial Resistance: The invisible threat affecting us all



By Mandy Tsotetsi

Every time antibiotics are used unnecessarily or incorrectly, we risk making them less effective for everyone. While antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is often associated with hospitals, its impact extends far beyond healthcare facilities; it affects our families, communities, food systems and the environment.

Research conducted through wastewater surveillance at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) indicates that antibiotic-resistant bacteria are present in rivers, wastewater and other water systems, demonstrating that antimicrobial resistance is not confined to clinical settings. These findings highlight how resistant microorganisms can move between people, animals and the environment, reinforcing the importance of a One Health approach that recognises the close interconnection between human, animal and environmental health. Antimicrobial resistance occurs when bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms evolve to survive medicines designed to kill them. Although this process happens naturally, the overuse and misuse of antibiotics accelerate resistance, making common infections increasingly difficult (and sometimes impossible) to treat. The consequences are significant: longer hospital stays, more complex medical care, higher healthcare costs, and, ultimately, poorer patient outcomes.

“To prevent deaths from AMR, there are several important solutions that involve all sectors of society. First, we need to educate the public about AMR and how to use antibiotics wisely. Secondly, we need to strengthen surveillance systems, which are the backbone of the solution, as they allow us to monitor as things evolve. Other solutions include

good hygiene, sanitation, and infection control practices to reduce the spread of resistant organisms,” said Prof. Vindana Chibabhai, Head of Centre for Health-Associated Infections, Antimicrobial Resistance and Mycoses (CHARM) at the NICD, emphasising that tackling AMR requires a collective effort across all sectors of society.

The fight against AMR is not only the responsibility of healthcare professionals. Every South African has a role to play by using antibiotics only when prescribed, never sharing or saving antibiotics for later use, completing prescribed treatment, practising good hygiene, and supporting infection prevention measures such as vaccination.

Strengthening Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance through innovation

To support healthcare facilities in responding more effectively to antimicrobial resistance, the NICD's CHARM will pilot its updated Antimicrobial Resistance Facility-level Dashboard from November 2026. This secure, interactive platform will provide authorised healthcare facilities with real-time antimicrobial resistance, antimicrobial susceptibility testing and infection prevention and control surveillance data. By enabling facilities to monitor local resistance patterns, strengthen antimicrobial stewardship programmes and detect emerging outbreaks earlier, the dashboard will support faster, evidence-based clinical and public health decision-making. A national rollout is planned for January 2027.





ON THE NICD AGENDA

This section showcases upcoming events, conferences, and activities in which NICD staff will participate, to keep staff and stakeholders informed and highlight opportunities for engagement.

Event	Date	Location
James Gear Memorial Lecture	11 November 2026	Virtual and in person
Data to Policy (D2P) Programme Forum 2026	13 November 2026	Hybrid

**Please note that the NICD may participate in additional events not listed here. As this issue was prepared in advance, some events may have been omitted. We encourage staff and the public to stay updated on our social media pages for any new developments.*

Spotlight on recent PHBSA articles

The Public Health Bulletin South Africa (PHBSA) offers essential insights and research on public health issues, including disease outbreaks, health interventions, and policy developments. Here are some of the key articles published recently.



Trends in HIV Load monitoring in the South African National HIV Treatment programme between 2029 and 2025

[Access Here](#)



Strengthening South Africa's public health response to climate change

[Access Here](#)



Epidemiology of respiratory pathogens from the influenza-like illness and pneumonia surveillance programmes, South Africa, 2024

[Access Here](#)



Laboratory-based surveillance of invasive pneumococcal disease in the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, and Mpumalanga provinces, South Africa (2019–2024)

[Access Here](#)

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TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT



Simulation exercise: Participants practise field investigation procedures, including the safe handling and collection of samples, use of personal protective equipment, controlled access to investigation areas, and management of potentially contaminated materials during a simulated biological investigation.

BUILDING READINESS FOR UNITED NATIONS BIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

By Dr Anastasia Trataris-Rebisz

The NICD hosted the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism (UNSGM) Fifth Annual Beginner Training Course in July. This training was conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and supported by the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI) and the UN Department of Security and Safety. The course was attended by 16 participants, who benefited from an intensive week of theoretical and practical training. The course formed part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the pool of experts who may support UN investigations into the alleged use of biological weapons.

The UNSGM is an important international mechanism through which the United Nations Secretary-General may initiate an investigation in response to reports from Member States concerning the possible use of chemical, biological or toxin weapons. Effective investigations depend on trained experts who can operate safely, objectively, and systematically in complex environments while preserving the integrity and credibility of evidence.

Practical activities and scenario-based exercises enabled participants to apply technical knowledge, practice decision-making, and appreciate the multidisciplinary nature of an international investigation.

Hosting the course reinforces the NICD's contribution to national, regional and global health security. By strengthening scientific, operational and collaborative capabilities, the course contributed to improved international preparedness for responding to suspected deliberate biological events and supported the credibility, effectiveness and readiness of the UNSGM.





Biological Waste Management Level 1 Training

20-24 July 2026

Regional Centre of Excellence for Biosafety and Biosecurity (RCoEBB), for the Southern Africa Region in Johannesburg, South Africa



Participants from seven Southern African countries attended the Biological Waste Management Level 1 Training Course, hosted by the NICD's Regional Centre of Excellence for Biosafety and Biosecurity in Johannesburg from 20–24 July 2026, strengthening regional capacity in the safe and effective management of biological waste.

NICD'S CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE ADVANCES BIOSAFETY AND BIOSECURITY CAPACITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

By Dr Anastasia Trataris-Rebisz

The NICD's Regional Centre of Excellence for Biosafety and Biosecurity recently delivered a regional Biological Waste Management Training Course as part of efforts to strengthen biosafety and security in Southern Africa. Attended by 14 participants representing seven countries: Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the course strengthened participants' understanding of the complete biological waste lifecycle. These include risk assessment, segregation, handling, storage, transportation, treatment, disposal, documentation and duty-of-care responsibilities. Practical exercises, real-world scenarios and facilitated discussions helped participants connect the course content to challenges encountered within their own institutions.

All respondents indicated that the course content was applicable to their work, and all expressed interest in joining a regional community of practice to support continued peer learning and collaboration.

This course was the first in a series of four training events being delivered by the Centre as part of the Africa Centres

for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) Biosafety and Biosecurity Training and Certification Programme. The other courses will focus on biocontainment engineering and biological risk management, which will be delivered separately in English and Portuguese, improving the accessibility of the programme to participants from across the Southern African region.

As the designated Regional Centre of Excellence for Southern Africa, the NICD plays a central role in advancing standardised approaches to biosafety and biosecurity, developing a competent regional workforce, and strengthening institutional and national biological risk management systems.

This programme demonstrates the value of collaboration between the NICD and Africa CDC in building regional expertise, strengthening laboratory systems and improving preparedness for biological risks and public health emergencies.



STRENGTHENING BIOSAFETY & BIOSECURITY GOVERNANCE AT THE NICD



Institutional Biosafety and Biosecurity Committee **Front, from the left:** Dr Anastasia Natasha Trataris-Rebisz, Dr Jenny Rossouw.
Back, from the left: Mr Wayne Howard, Dr Halima Said, Ms Bhavani Moodley, Dr Jacqueline Weyer, Sister Ida Jordaan, Ms Khumbudzo Mbengwa, Prof. Nicola Page, Ms Ruth Mogokotleng.

By Dr Anastasia Trataris-Rebisz

In July, the Institutional Biosafety and Biosecurity Committee (IBBC) conducted a dedicated strategic planning and governance workshop to strengthen its structures and guide its activities over the next three years. A key outcome was the validation of the IBBC Strategic Plan for 2026–2028, structured around six pillars: governance, oversight, capacity building, preparedness, biosecurity, and culture and communication.

The IBBC supports the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) in conducting its diagnostic, surveillance, research and public health activities safely, securely and responsibly. The IBBC's role extends beyond compliance. It provides an important platform for collaboration, institutional learning and informed decision-making. By strengthening governance and embedding biological risk management into routine operations, the Committee contributes directly to organisational resilience, workforce safety and public health security.

As a strategic governance and oversight committee, the IBBC promotes the effective management of biological risks across the institution. Its responsibilities include supporting compliance with applicable legislation, standards and institutional requirements; reviewing activities involving biological materials; strengthening risk assessment and incident management; and promoting a positive culture of biosafety, biosecurity and responsible scientific conduct. Through its work, the Committee helps protect NICD personnel, the public, the environment and the biological materials and information entrusted to the institution.



Achievements

Ms Singh earns top honours in MBA Healthcare

In January 2024, Ms Beverley Singh, who is based in the HIV Sero-Molecular Laboratory at the Centre for HIV and STIs, took on a new challenge by enrolling in the MBA in Healthcare Management programme at Regent Business School. Although she already held undergraduate degrees in Medical Technology and Biomedical Technology, as well as a master's in biomedical technology, the MBA introduced her to an entirely new field of study.

Two years later, she graduated cum laude, earning the Best Student Award in MBA Healthcare, the Best Research Award in MBA Healthcare, and the prestigious Prof. Narendra Bhana Overall MBA Award. Reflecting on her journey, Ms Singh believes there is no "perfect time" to pursue further education. "The perfect time is now. If you have the means and the will, you must begin because dreams only materialise when you take the first step."

Ms Singh expressed her sincere gratitude to the NICD, especially Prof. Adrian Puren for his support, to Mr Henry Julius for his assistance with data collection and content, and to her family and colleagues in the HIV Sero-Molecular Laboratory for their unwavering encouragement throughout her academic journey.



What are people saying on social media?



National Institute For Communicable Diseases



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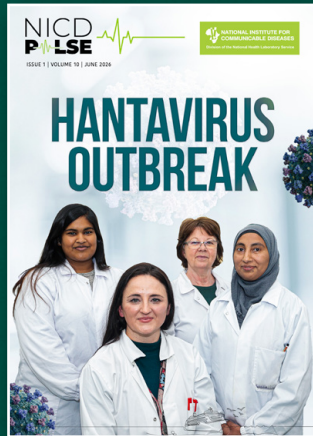


@NICD_SA



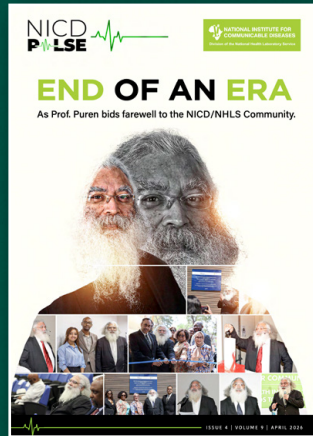
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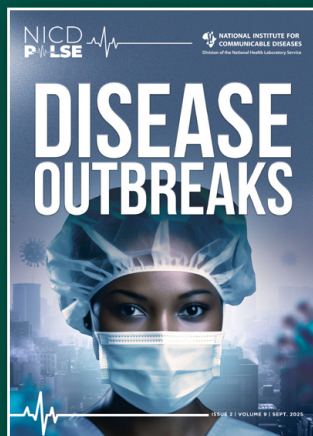
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