

RePORT International Newsletter

February 2024

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BREAKING GROUND:

Dialogues on Academic Advancement, Laboratory Leadership, and Trailblazing Innovations in TB Healthcare



In a recent interview with Ms. Daphne Martin, the TB RICC Program Manager, Dr. Moses Joloba, a renowned scientist in Uganda's medical and research community and a RePORT International Principal Investigator, shared insights into his remarkable journey in the field of tuberculosis (TB) research.

Interest in tuberculosis and early influences

From his early days as a physician in Uganda to leading the National TB Reference Laboratory, now a Supra National Reference Laboratory, Dr. Joloba has played a pivotal role in shaping TB research and services in the region. Dr. Joloba's journey began with a strong foundation as a physician in Uganda, where he developed a keen interest in Microbiology to comprehend the intricacies of disease pathogenesis. "When I was at Case Western Reserve University, doing my master's in microbiology, my peers influenced me a great deal. My main supervisor was working on streptococcus in our laboratory and the committee and the people who were sponsoring me were also interested in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. So, I was torn between those two, and I ended up doing a master's thesis on both diseases, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. When I returned to Uganda, I worked on both diseases but since TB was a compelling endemic causing a lot of problems, I made my career choice."

One of the key highlights of Dr. Joloba's career is his leadership in revitalizing the National TB Reference Laboratory in Kampala. Tasked with transforming a facility in disrepair, he successfully obtained international accreditation, expanded the team's capacity from 5 to 80 members, and extended support to 26 countries in East, Central, and South Africa. His academic journey also saw him rise from an assistant lecturer to a distinguished professor, contributing to the training of numerous students and Ph.D candidates which he considers one of his greatest achievements. He believes in knowledge transfer and passing on the baton to the younger generation. Throughout his academic and research endeavors, Dr. Joloba acknowledged the guidance of mentors such as Professor Jerrold Ellner, Professor Henry Boom, Professor Christopher Whalen, Professor Kathleen Eisenach, Dr. Armand Van Deun, Professor Michael Jacobs, Professor Nelson Sewankambo and Dr Baingana Baingi. Dr. Joloba also continues to be inspired by his students as each day is a new learning experience in his classrooms.

Impacting Uganda's health systems

Dr. Joloba's impact extends beyond the laboratory, as evidenced by the establishment of the Makerere University Biomedical Research Center. This center has played a crucial role in responding to health crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and leading ebola studies in Uganda.

In discussing breakthroughs, Dr. Joloba outlined several achievements, including enhanced laboratory capacity, the development of an in-house information system from scratch, and the establishment of a biobank serving multiple African regions. He emphasized the cultural shift within the team to embrace the importance of partnerships for technology transfer. The opportunities for capacity building also played a crucial role in building the infrastructure for the local communities.

Despite facing bureaucratic challenges such as delayed procurements, approvals, and a shortage of qualified personnel, Dr. Joloba's determination, collaborative spirit, and problem-solving attitude allowed him to overcome these obstacles. "Focusing on the end goal rather than getting bogged down by processes, coupled with strong public support, facilitated the progress of our initiatives. I believe joining forces with partners has been one of the greatest boons that helped navigate through these obstacles."

Lessons learned, community services, and the future

Expressing optimism about Uganda's TB research future, Dr. Joloba takes pride in the country's internationally accredited research laboratories and digitized

diagnosis systems. He discussed the importance of mentorship and setting high career goals especially for students in the TB research world. “TB is a preventable disease, it is a curable disease, and yet it continues to claim lives. With all the technologies, we can optimize what we have and improve things.”

Dr. Joloba expressed aspirations for his center to develop products and services addressing local problems. “Serving the community is something very close to my heart. In fact, when I came here, there was one laboratory, and no way for people to access lab services across the country. I immediately thought of the role of the Post Office. There were buses coming every day from all over the country, some of them twice a day. So, I created a system where the samples were carried by the buses to the post office which helped us to collect samples.” This innovation paid off and he was able to set higher standards of sample sharing.

To Dr. Joloba, RePORT International presents itself as an excellent opportunity for research alliances. His experience in Goa at the RePORT International Annual Meeting in September 2023 was highly positive, revealing a wealth of available information. He reflected by saying, “I am impressed that India had progressed in terms of basic sciences and would like to have more discussions to exchange ideas. They probably have similar conditions like us.” He feels the amalgamation of these insights and the use of samples could prove valuable in assessing the effectiveness of various programs.

Dr. Joloba’s dream is to package a product for communities to have access to and find ways to address the needs of the population. This will entail working closely with stakeholders such as local government to manufacture diagnostic kits that can be made available to people in dire need. He says, “The COVID-19 pandemic helped our nation to understand its limitations. So, it is now time to build a more sustainable infrastructure that will address the flow of resources. With the available resources, it will be possible to achieve greater dreams of ending the toll of TB.”

Message from Jerrold Ellner, Director, TB RICC

The addition of RePORT Uganda to RePORT International adds great value because of the sentinel research and training programs that include Uganda: the TB Research Unit, FEND-TB, Halting TB Transmission, and the Global Infectious Diseases Training Program to name a few. Currently, Case Western Reserve, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins, Rutgers, UCSF, Yale, and the University of Amsterdam have collaborative research programs in Uganda.

Dr. Moses Joloba is the perfect leader for RePORT International at this juncture. He has held a number of prestigious positions at Makerere University most recently Dean of Biomedical Sciences in the College of Health Sciences and currently CEO of the Makerere University Biomedical Research Center. He also directs the regional Referral TB laboratory in Uganda, designated by the WHO as a supranational laboratory. Moses also has taken the lead on the national response to other infectious diseases such as Ebola and COVID-19. As a collaborator, friend and admirer I thank Moses for his efforts in making RePORT Uganda a reality – and thank him for the interview!

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Rajita Bhavaraju, Director of Global Operations for the RePORT International Coordinating Center, has been appointed for a 3-year term to the Advisory Council for the Elimination for Tuberculosis (ACET). ACET makes recommendations regarding TB-related policies, strategies, and priorities, addresses the development and application of new technologies, and reviews the progress toward eliminating tuberculosis in the United States.

CRDF Global Request for Applications (RFA)

Deadline: April 15, 2024

HIV Cure-Related Research in Africa: The U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), invites researchers to submit full proposals for the competition titled 'HIV Cure-Related Research in Africa'. This initiative, organized and administered by CRDF Global on behalf of NIAD, will provide funding to awards of no more than \$150,000 USD per applicant in support of expanding knowledge on HIV persistence and post-treatment control in people living with non-subtype B HIV in Africa. Proposals may propose basic, translational, preclinical, or clinical research studies using existing human samples or samples derived from separately funded HIV cohorts or clinical trials to analyze and compare non-subtype B HIV persistence and post-treatment control.

Full proposals must be submitted electronically, using CRDF Global's proposal package template. All proposals must be submitted electronically to CRDF Global via email, health@crdfglobal.org, no later than April 15, 2024, (23:59) U.S. Eastern Standard Time (EST). All eligible proposals will be subjected to a technical review process by experts in the appropriate fields.

Please visit CRDF Global's website to view the Request for Applications (RFA): HIV Cure-Related Research in Africa request for proposals for more information.

[LEARN MORE](#)

USJCMSP 24th International Conference

Happening: March 5-8, 2024

The Joint 24th International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Pacific Rim of the U.S.-Japan Cooperative Medical Sciences Program (USJCMSP) in collaboration with the 2nd International Symposium for Infectious Diseases Research Institutes Cooperation (IDRIC) is being hosted by the National Institutes of Health, Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development, Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, and International Vaccine Institute in Incheon, South Korea.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Special Lectures

"Decoding Tuberculosis: Advancements and Future Directions in Diagnostic and Pathogenesis Biomarkers"

by **Bruno Bezerril Andrade**, M.D., Ph.D., Principal Investigator and Department Head at the Laboratory of Clinical and Translational Research Goncalo Moniz Institute, part of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, RePORT International Investigator

Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 12:00 pm ET

Zoom Meeting ID: 98015587192 & Password: 903754

[ZOOM LINK](#)

"New tools plus new questions from host-derived biomarker research for TB"

by **Gerhard Walzl**, M.D., Professor of Biomedical Sciences, Executive Head, Department of Biomedical Sciences Head, Division of Immunology; and Director, Stellenbosch University Immunology Research Group (SUN-IRG) South Africa, RePORT International Investigator

Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 3:00 pm ET

Zoom Meeting ID: 957 5574 3858 & Password: 954676

[ZOOM LINK](#)

World TB Day Webinars

RePORT International in collaboration with Rutgers Global Tuberculosis Institute is pleased to announce two webinars in commemoration of World TB Day.

Join us for a special lecture by **Dr. Jennifer Furin**, titled **"Is Tuberculosis Care Humanistic? What the Latest Evidence Reveals"**. This lecture will be a reminder of why the work of RePORT is integral to improving the lives of the world's most at-risk individuals. Dr. Furin is a medical anthropologist and infectious diseases physician who has dedicated her career over the span of three decades to improving access to care for all people living with drug-resistant TB, with a focus on vulnerable populations including children, pregnant people, incarcerated individuals, and migrants.

March 19, 2024, from 8 am-9 am ET. Connection details to follow.

Dr. Farai Mavhunga will be speaking on **TB and Social Determinants of Health**. Dr. Mavhunga is the Unit Head for the Vulnerable Populations,

Communities and Comorbidities unit at the WHO Global Tuberculosis Program based in Geneva. He is a medical doctor with specializations in HIV/AIDS (MPhil) and public health (MPH). He has contributed to several journal publications on TB and TB/HIV related topics and has experience in clinical and programmatic management of TB in high-burden settings. Dr. Mavhunga has previously served as a National Tuberculosis Program manager for Namibia for 10 years.

March 25, 2024, from 1 pm-2 pm CET

ZOOM LINK

REPORT INTERNATIONAL LAB TRAINING PROGRAM

RePORT's Lab Fellows continue their hands-on training journey. Here is their February schedule:

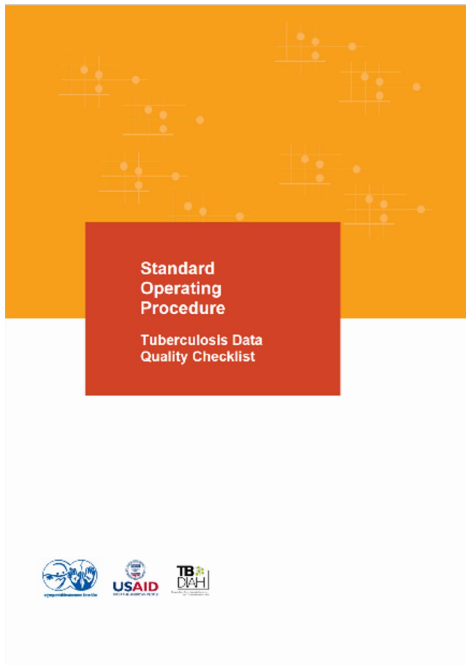
Trainee →	Ruby King (Philippines)	Gustiani Salim (Indonesia)	Amsaveni Sivaprakasam (India)	Prakash Babu Narasimhan (India)	John Carlo Malabad (Philippines)
SATVI (Scriba), Cape Town, SA	5-16 Feb	5-16 Feb	5-16 Feb	5-16 Feb	5-16 Feb
FioCRUZ (Andrade), Salvador, BR	19 Feb- 1 Mar	19 Feb- 1 Mar			

RESOURCES



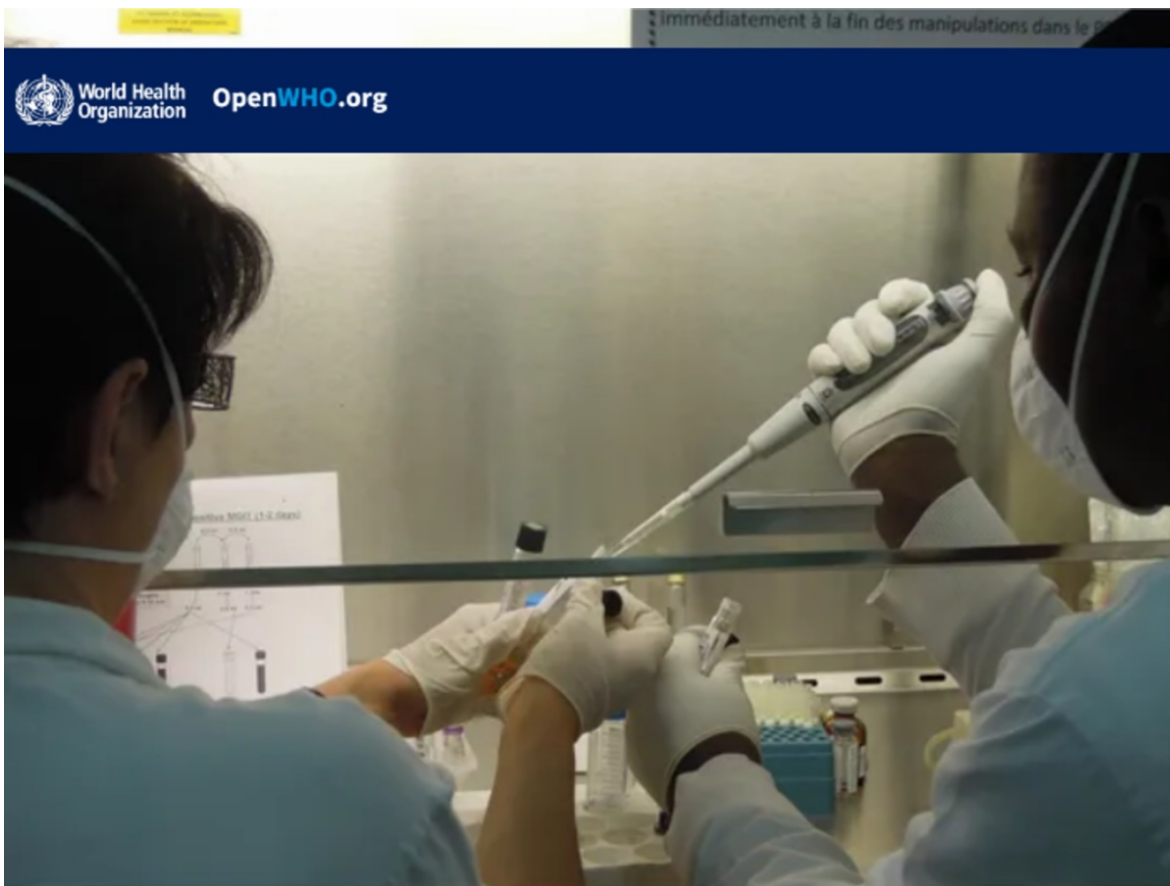
The American Thoracic Society hosted an important webinar called **Equity in Global Health Research**. This webinar reviewed the issues and most recent evidence on equity in global health research, including the perspectives of

researchers, journal editors, department chairs, and funders, with an emphasis on how to optimize equity in research programs.



TB DIAH has released Tuberculosis Data Quality Checklist: Standard Operating Procedure. It is meant to be used with the [Data Quality Review Tool and Dashboard](#) to conduct data quality checks on reporting completeness and timeliness, data accuracy, and internal consistency of reported data.

You can find the e-learning course, [Drug-resistant tuberculosis: how to interpret rapid molecular test results](#) on WHO's open course site. This training toolkit by the European Laboratory Initiative for TB, HIV and Viral Hepatitis provides a combination of practical guidance and expert advice on the interpretation of selected WHO-endorsed tests for drug-resistant tuberculosis.



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