

# GLOPID-R AFRICA HUB LAUNCH

22-23 AUGUST 2023

## FINAL REPORT

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## 1. THE GLOPID-R AFRICA HUB: BACKGROUND

The Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R) is a worldwide alliance of research funding organizations working to facilitate coordinated research related to new and emerging infectious diseases with epidemic and pandemic potential. One of GloPID-R's primary goals is to identify gaps and ensure that funding aligns with research needs, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The Africa Hub was established to support this core objective. The Africa Hub Secretariat extends GloPID-R's strategic research preparedness and response focus within the African continent. The Hub Secretariat is conducting comprehensive mapping of the funding for infectious disease research and working to engage with funders to enhance regional involvement and membership.

This inaugural meeting was convened to launch the Hub and bring together regional partners, attract new members, and formulate a collective agenda for recognizing, facilitating, and conducting relevant research.

This initiative responds to an immediate need to enhance leadership and coordination for preparing and responding to pandemics in LMICs. Valuable lessons gathered from previous experiences, including the COVID-19 pandemic and outbreaks of other potentially epidemic and pandemic infectious diseases like Ebola, tuberculosis (TB), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), must be consolidated, and further developed, particularly within the African continent. This is crucial to ensure that available resources for research, relevant to the specific context, are deployed swiftly and efficiently in the event of the emergence or re-emergence of an infectious disease.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference's main objective was to officially launch the GloPID-R Africa Hub and Secretariat and to bring together key regional stakeholders, to:

- Assess Africa's response to national and regional epidemics with a particular focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Evaluate the state of pandemic research preparedness on the continent.
- Foster collaboration and coordination among funders based on shared goals.
- Identify priority research areas on the continent and ways of addressing them.
- Explore ways of strengthening early warning and surveillance systems.
- Discuss approaches to lowering identified barriers to effective research on the continent (from research to policy to practice).

## 3. DAY 1: A BEACON OF COLLABORATION

Day 1 of the GloPID-R Africa Hub Launch meeting underscored the critical need for proactive pandemic preparedness in Africa, illustrating the importance of investing in research, surveillance, healthcare infrastructure, and equitable healthcare access. Lessons gleaned from the COVID-19 pandemic, related to topics such as healthcare disparities and mortality rates, show a need to address ongoing health challenges like TB, HIV, and non-communicable diseases while also strengthening defenses against

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future pandemics. GloPID-R supports coordinated funding and research efforts to effectively combat infectious diseases with pandemic potential. The Africa CDC's commitment to building resilient health systems and promoting local action further emphasized the importance of collaboration and proactive measures to enhance public health outcomes in Africa. Day 1 conversations contributed to the key message that a united, collaborative, and well-funded approach is essential to safeguard the health and well-being of Africa and the world in the face of emerging health threats.

Conversations on specific topics are outlined below.



Figure 1: Africa Hub Launch participants, Day 1

#### 4. WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS

**Professor Glenda Gray**, CEO and President of the South African Medical Research Council, welcomed participants including GloPID-R, local stakeholders and funders, and introduced the work of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and its focus on research that impacts the lives of South Africans. She emphasized the importance of science, surveillance, and investment in healthcare infrastructure to prepare for future pandemics while addressing ongoing health challenges, in line with the establishment of the GloPID-R Africa Hub.



Figure 2: Prof. Glenda Gray, President and CEO of SAMRC.

Prof. Gray underlined the importance of pandemic preparedness over the next 10 to 15 years in Africa and of investing in research and surveillance: keeping vital statistics, maintaining the National Health Laboratory Service, funding diagnostics, and establishing surveillance systems, including genomic and wastewater surveillance.

She discussed the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed disparities in healthcare, mortality rates, and the importance of addressing multi-morbidity and health equity. It is essential to continue investing in ways to address slow-burning pandemics, such as TB and HIV, as well as the emerging pandemic of non-communicable diseases. One of Prof. Gray's key messages is that

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Africa should utilize its existing infrastructure to address these health challenges while also preparing for future pandemics, bearing in mind a potential connection to climate change and zoonotic diseases. Thanking important funders for being in the room, she emphasized that investing in science, ensuring funding, and supporting research is crucial for pandemic preparedness. Even after Prof. Gray steps down as CEO and President, SAMRC will continue working on expanding clinical trial capabilities, laboratory infrastructure, and vaccine manufacturing in Africa.

## 5. OVERVIEW OF GLOPID-R

**Dr. Hans Hagen** presented the goals, achievements, and future directions of GloPID-R. As an alliance of funding organizations with a shared interest in investing in research related to pathogens and infectious diseases with the potential to cause outbreaks, GloPID-R pursues three key objectives:

- **Preparedness:** Investing in research to be better prepared for pandemics and outbreaks.
- **Coordination:** Ensuring a coordinated and aligned research response, to address infectious disease outbreaks effectively and efficiently.
- **Sustained focus:** Maintaining attention and engagement between epidemics and pandemics to continue preparedness efforts.



Figure 3: Dr. Hans Hagen, GloPID-R Scientific and Advocacy Director.

GloPID-R currently has 35 members and 7 observers, including public funders and foundations such as the Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust, and many other leading global organizations.

Its areas of focus include:

- **Clinical trials:** GloPID-R has worked on creating a roadmap for clinical trials, emphasizing the need for coordination, and reducing redundancy in research efforts.

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- **Decision making and evidence:** The organization has developed capabilities for rapid research needs assessment and policy research to support evidence-based decision-making during outbreaks.
- **Coordinated funding:** Efforts are underway to establish a platform for coordinated funding to reduce fragmentation and duplication among funders.
- **Regional Hubs:** GloPID-R is establishing regional hubs to enhance efficiency and local ownership to address regional and global outbreaks.
- **One Health:** There is growing interest in this holistic approach to combat infectious diseases by taking into account the importance of human health, animal health and environmental factors (including climate change) in pathogen transmission.
- **Collaborative initiatives:** GloPID-R is collaborating with many other organizations and networks, such as the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases, for coordinated funding approaches, to amplify its impact and avoid duplication of efforts.

Since fragmented funding results in fragmented research, coordinating the work of funders is essential.

## 6. EPIDEMICS AND PANDEMICS: SNAPSHOTS OF PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE FOR AFRICA

**Dr. Elvis Temfack** highlighted the challenges of addressing epidemics and pandemics in Africa, the role of international health regulations, and the importance of institutions like the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) in coordinating and strengthening public health systems on the continent.



Figure 4: Dr. Elvis Temfack, Senior Research Officer, Africa CDC.

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To provide historical context, he traced the origins of international health regulations back to the post-World War II era when disease control was closely linked to sanitation. These regulations evolved into the International Health Regulations (IHR) adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1969. The IHR aimed to address the global spread of infectious diseases as trade and travel increased. Despite multiple revisions, the IHR's implementation in member states, including African nations, fell short of the goal to detect, report and respond to potential epidemics. One of the significant achievements since the IHR's launch was the eradication of smallpox, but Africa continues to face frequent outbreaks. The need remains for strong, resilient, and proactive health systems and a coordinated approach through sustainable local initiatives. Having an institution like the Africa CDC to coordinate efforts on the continent is very important.

Dr. Temfack briefly introduced the Africa CDC, established in 2017, as an autonomous health institution of the African Union with a mission to strengthen public health institutions in member states, detect and respond to disease threats, and promote health. Its governance structure includes a committee of heads of state, reflecting the importance of political support. He outlined the Africa CDC's approach, which focuses on strengthening public health institutions, expanding local manufacturing, and developing a fit-for-purpose public health workforce. He also emphasized the importance of action-oriented partnerships and increasing domestic resources for health.

The Africa CDC has six main pillars of operation: controlling and preventing diseases, surveillance and detection, workforce development, research, emergency preparedness and response, and laboratory systems. In his closing, Dr. Temfack called for global collaboration combined with local action to bring about positive change and address public health challenges in Africa.

## 7. 3RD AFRICA HEALTH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUNDERS FORUM

**Professor Richard Gordon** announced the upcoming “3rd Africa Health Research and Innovation Funders Forum” and explained its origins. This meeting was established in response to a need to understand and coordinate funding for health research in South Africa.



Figure 5: Prof. Richard Gordon, Director of International Business Development, SAMRC.

Two case studies illustrate the challenges of funding duplication and lack of interoperability among health-related projects and initiatives:

- **The First Case Study** involved conducting a survey of major health research funders, revealing that there was more funding available than initially thought, with a significant portion coming from foreign sources. However, there was a lack of coordination, and many funders were unaware of what others were funding, leading to potential duplication.
- **The Second Case Study** focused on the challenges of developing digital health solutions for TB adherence. While multiple apps were being funded, they were not interoperable, causing inefficiencies and duplication of efforts. Integration costs exceeded the total budget of individual projects.

Prof. Gordon described the first two meetings held to address these issues, where funders gathered to discuss their work, needs, and areas of interest. Funders appreciated the networking opportunities and thematic sessions and requested more networking events. Based on feedback, the initiative was expanded, with more participants from various funders, including those from other African countries. The goal was to make it a continental event.

Prof. Gordon emphasized the importance of scaling innovations and procurement, citing examples of pilot projects aimed at local drug manufacturing for diseases like HIV and malaria. He encouraged stakeholders to participate in the upcoming Funders Forum, designed to foster collaboration and coordination among funders; he stressed that it is not a platform for pitching individual projects. In closing, Prof. Gordon highlighted the challenges of duplication, lack of interoperability, and the need for better coordination among funders to maximize the impact of health research initiatives.

## 8. GLOPID-R WORKING GROUPS: CLINICAL TRIAL NETWORKS & DATA SHARING

Dr. Alice Norton provided an update on two of GloPID-R's Working Groups:

- **The Clinical Trial Networks & Funders (CTN&F) Working Group** fosters collaboration among funding organizations to improve coordination and preparedness for clinical trials during outbreaks. It addresses issues such as resource allocation, geographical disparities, and capacity building. This group has evolved over time, particularly in response to the Zika emergency and the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The working group's key recent deliverable, "[The GloPID-R Funders Living Roadmap for Clinical Trial Coordination](#)," was published on May 4, 2023. Setting out clear goals, principles, and recommendations, it represents a valuable tool for funders and other stakeholders.
- **The Data Sharing Working Group** aims to improve data interoperability, transparency, and sharing within the research community during outbreaks. The "[GloPID-R Roadmap for Data Sharing in Public Health Emergencies](#)," published in June 2019, provides guidance for funders to support better data management and sharing practices.

Both roadmaps are available on the GloPID-R website. Dr. Norton also presented **Pandemic PACT** (the Pandemic Analytical Capacity & Funding Tracking Programme). Based on lessons learned from the UKCDR and GloPID-R Covid-19 Research Project Tracker, the new PACT tool, currently in development, will enhance transparency in research funding by tracking data about research funding and evidence related to priority diseases. It will help funders and researchers identify gaps and collaborate more effectively. Dr. Norton emphasized the importance of categorizing research effectively to support decision making and coordination. The collaborative efforts of GloPID-R members to address challenges related to clinical trials, data sharing, and research funding during outbreaks contributes to improved transparency and coordination among funding organizations and researchers.



Figure 6: Dr. Alice Norton, Head of GLOPID-R Research & Policy Team and PI, Pandemic PACT.

**9. GLOPID-R PILLAR PROJECT: COORDINATED FUNDING MECHANISM**

**Dr. Hans Hagen** discussed the development of a coordinated funding platform for research projects and presented three possible funding models: a very basic synchronized funding system, the same basic model but with a single portal, and a unique rapid response funding model dissociating funding from quality control. Most GloPID-R members have expressed support for a modified version of the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) model. A recent survey indicated a very strong interest amongst members to participate in and contribute to this coordinated funding initiative. Long-term ambitions include establishing this platform as a permanent feature, exploring rapid response mechanisms, and adding value through additional activities, such as an award holder meeting, summer schools, and training opportunities for awardees. In closing, Dr. Hagen encouraged continued member involvement and collaboration as the project is implemented in the coming weeks and months.

**10. GLOPID-R WORKING GROUP: RESEARCH IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES**

The working group devoted to Research in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) has been actively involved in research prioritization and coordinated funding efforts to support preparedness and response in lower and middle-income countries, with a focus on lessons learned and ongoing initiatives. Prof. Charles Wiysonge outlined the group's objectives: supporting coordinated research funding for preparedness and response to epidemics and pandemics in low-resource settings, facilitating capacity strengthening amongst funders in these regions, and mapping global research networks. In June 2023, the Research Prioritisation Sub-group published the report "[Lessons Learnt from Developing and Applying Research Priorities during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)," which can be downloaded from the GloPID-R website. Prof. Wiysonge briefly outlined the seven principles established by the COVID Circle initiative, emphasizing the importance of alignment with global research agendas, research capacity strengthening, equity, open science, ethical considerations, and collaboration.

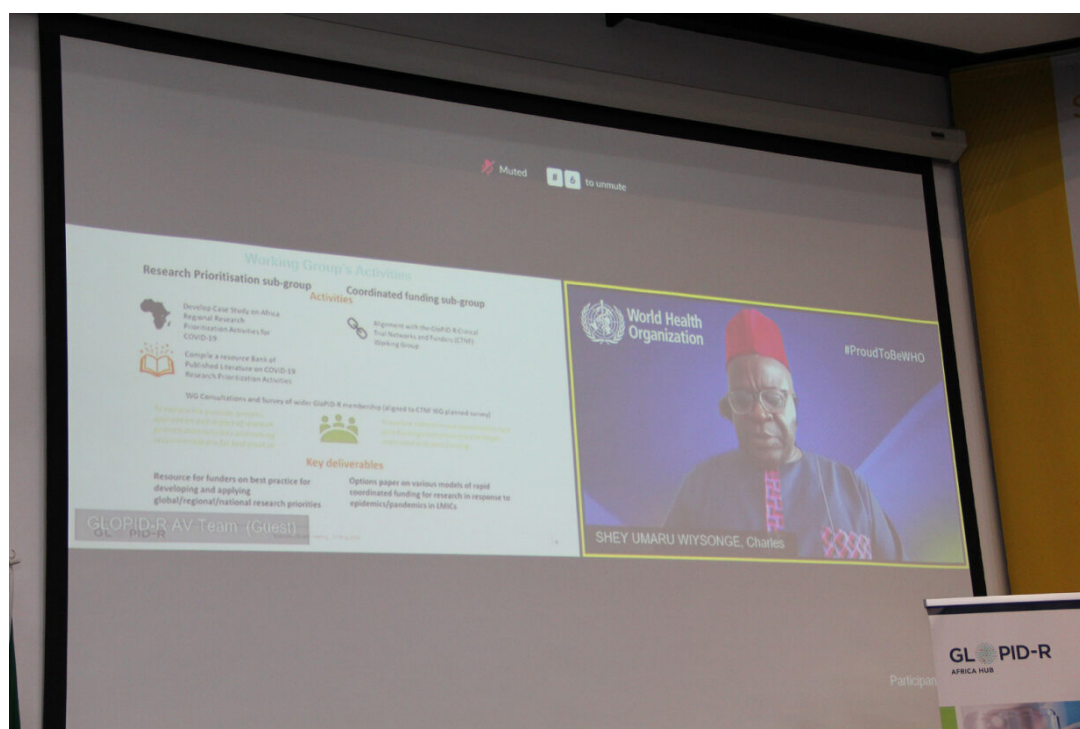


Figure 7: Prof. Charles Shey Wiysonge, WHO regional adviser.

## 11. DAY 2: ENHANCING THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH ON PANDEMIC POLICY

The crucial role of research in informing policy decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic was the main takeaway message from the plenary talks on Day 2 of the Africa Hub launch.

Prof. Salim S. Abdool Karim emphasized the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19 and the importance of research in understanding the virus's evolving nature, its impact on various body systems, and the challenges of Long COVID. Research has not only been instrumental in responding to the pandemic but has also played a vital role in supporting global efforts, evaluating diagnostic tests, conducting clinical trials for vaccines, and guiding policy decisions. He emphasized the need for global cooperation and solidarity, as learned from the HIV/AIDS movement.

Dr. Michelle Mulder and Prof. Charles Wiysonge highlighted the significance of organizations like SAMRC and GloPID-R, especially through its regional hubs, in fostering research, innovation, and capacity development to address infectious disease outbreaks, particularly in Africa. Dr. Emilia Antonio presented the challenges and ongoing efforts related to identifying funders for infectious disease research in Africa, emphasizing the need for defining what constitutes a funder, further validation of data, and expanding the reach of the GloPID-R Africa Hub. Prof. Choong-Min Ryu underlined the importance of expanding GloPID-R membership in Asia and establishing national-level networking systems to better prepare for infectious disease outbreaks. Overall, the talks emphasized the critical link between research and effective policy responses to pandemics.



Figure 8: Africa Hub Launch participants, Day 2

## 12. PLENARY TALK: COVID-19 RESEARCH FOR POLICY & LESSONS LEARNED

**Prof. Salim S. Abdool Karim** shared three years of experience in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on research, its impact on policy, and lessons learned. He touched upon several key topics, including:

- **Current pandemic status:** Prof. Abdool Karim acknowledged the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. There are still around 50,000 daily cases and 50 to 100 daily deaths globally. Countering those who downplay the virus's impact on global health, he reminded attendees of the over 7 million reported deaths, and 24 million estimated deaths to date.
- **The evolving understanding of COVID-19:** Our understanding of COVID-19 is still evolving. The virus affects various systems in the body in addition to the respiratory tract and has a widespread impact.

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- **Challenges of Long COVID:** Some 10% to 20% of patients experience persistent symptoms, particularly fatigue and cognitive dysfunction, which significantly affect their daily lives.
- **Impact on heart health:** There is an increased risk of heart disease associated with Long COVID, irrespective of pre-existing cardiac risk factors.
- **Economic Impact:** The economic consequences of Long COVID are significant: a number of workers in the UK have been unable to return to work due to cognitive issues and fatigue caused by the condition.
- **Research and policy response:** Research has played a critical role in responding to the pandemic. Prof. Salim S. Abdool Karim shared examples of research conducted in South Africa and its influence on policy decisions. The scope of such research includes developing a staged response to the pandemic, assessing the impact of COVID-19 on other medical care, and identifying and analyzing COVID-19 variants.
- **Role in global efforts:** Research has played a key role in supporting global efforts, including evaluating diagnostic tests, conducting clinical trials for vaccines, and assessing immune responses to new variants.
- **Impact on Advocacy and Policy:** COVID-19 research has been a driving force in advocacy and in providing guidance to governments worldwide. It has contributed to global policy discussions.
- **Lessons from HIV:** Drawing a parallel between the response to COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS work, the speaker emphasized the need for shared vision, shared responsibility, and global solidarity in addressing pandemics. He criticized a lack of global cooperation and the "me-first" approach in response to COVID-19.

In conclusion, Prof. Abdool Karim emphasized the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19, the importance of research in informing policy decisions, and the need for global cooperation and solidarity to effectively address pandemics.

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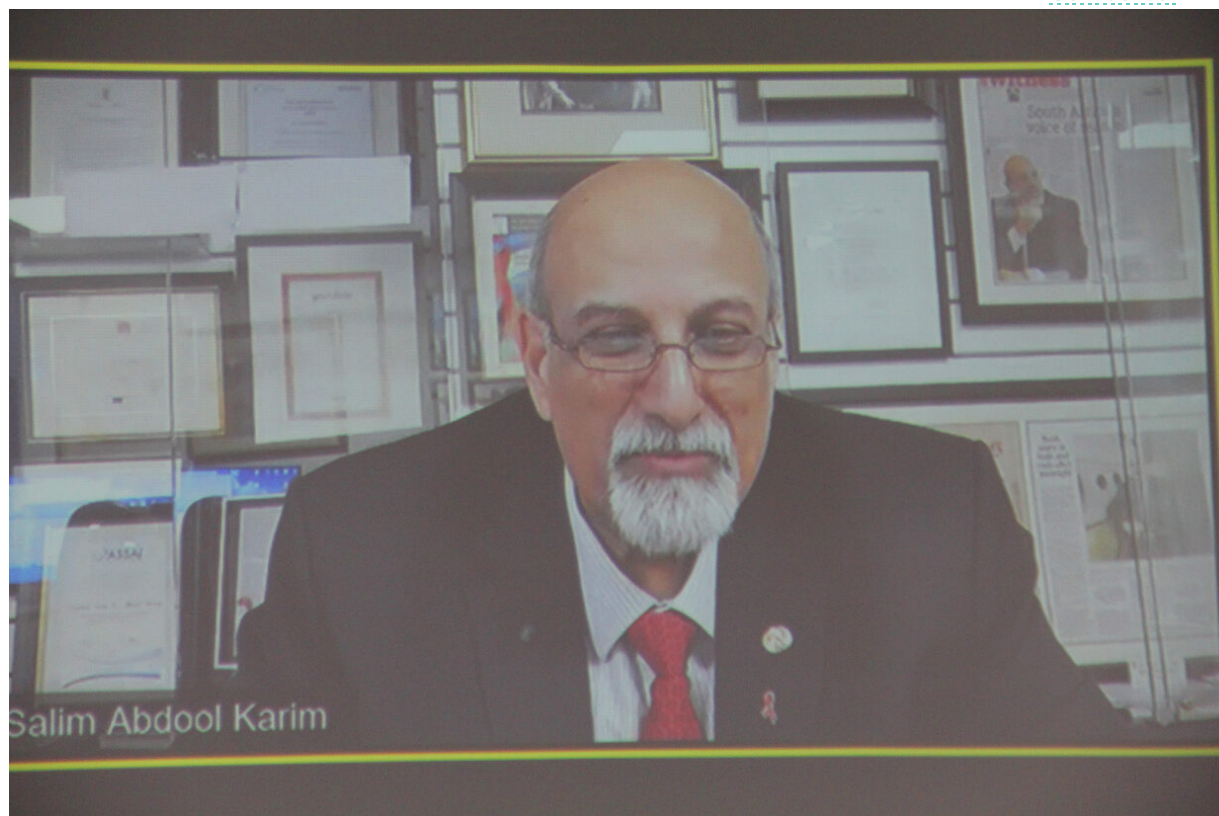


Figure 9: Prof. Salim S. Abdool Karim, Director of CAPRISA (Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa) and Chair of the UNAIDS Scientific Expert Panel.

### 13. OVERVIEW OF SAMRC AS A RESEARCH FUNDING ORGANIZATION: GRANTS, INNOVATION AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT UNIT

**Dr. Michelle Mulder** welcomed the establishment of the Africa Regional Hub to allow research funders to collaborate, coordinate, and share experiences. She presented the structure and functions of SAMRC and described its commitment to addressing health inequalities and promoting justice, particularly in health research and development. She provided insights into SAMRC's various funding mechanisms, including strategic partnerships and innovation support. In addition, Dr. Mulder underlined the importance of robust grant management systems and the success of leveraging funds through strategic partnerships. Organizations like SAMRC play a vital role in fostering research, innovation, and capacity development in the healthcare sector.

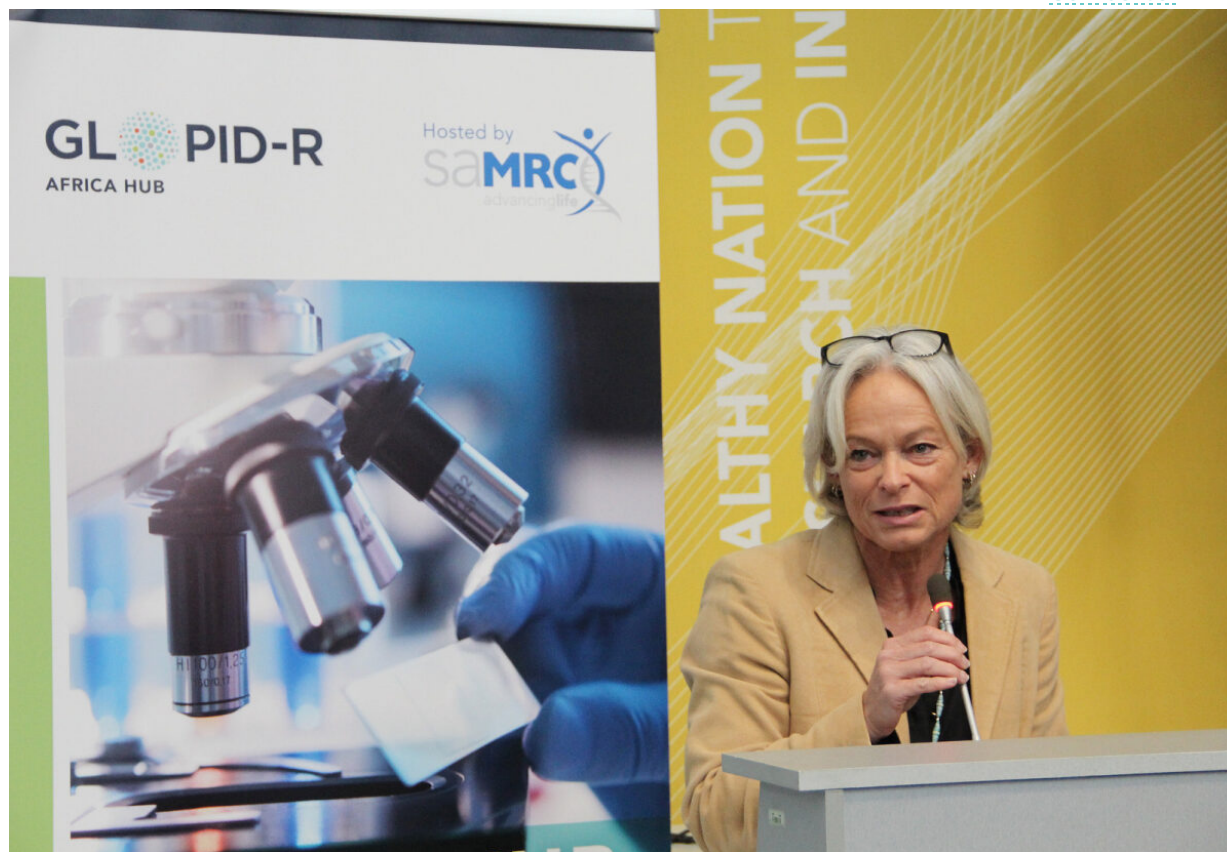


Figure 10: Dr. Michelle Mulder, Executive Director of the Grants, Innovation, and Product Development Unit, SAMRC.

#### 14. THE NEED FOR THE AFRICA HUB

**Prof. Charles Wiysonge** reviewed the objectives and motivations for GloPID-R's regional hub strategy: to strengthen research preparedness at the regional level and facilitate rapid and aligned funding during emergencies. The SAMRC was selected to host the Africa Hub based on its expertise and contributions to pandemic response, as outlined in Dr. Mulder's presentation. The pilot phase of the Africa Hub began in September 2022. Since then, the Regional Hub Secretariat has been working closely with the GloPID-R Central Secretariat to survey and engage local funders, strengthen research networks, set regional research priorities, and planning steps to enhance pandemic preparedness in Africa. Prof. Wiysonge highlighted the importance of regional hubs to promote collaboration, capacity strengthening, and proactive planning to address infectious disease outbreaks, with a particular focus on Africa. He also expressed gratitude to the conference participants and encouraged further discussions and refinement of the hub's role and activities.

#### 15. OVERVIEW OF FUNDERS IN AFRICA

**Dr. Emilia Antonio** discussed the background activities undertaken by the GloPID-R Secretariat in relation to funding for infectious disease research, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted the COVID Circle initiative and the UKCDR and [GloPID-R COVID-19 Research Project Tracker](#) as tools for funders to track research funding investments and align them with research priorities. **Phiywayinkosi Dlodla** described efforts to identify funders in Africa which revealed that a significant

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portion of research funding in Africa comes from external sources, particularly America and Europe. About 142 funders in 19 African countries were identified, with South Africa, Egypt, and Kenya having the most funders. While emphasizing the challenges of defining what constitutes a research funder and the need for further validation of the information obtained, Dr. Antonio explained that data on research funding remains unavailable in many countries in Africa. In closing, she outlined the next steps for the GloPID-R Africa Hub: engaging stakeholders, conducting surveys, and exploring networks to identify potential hub members. She acknowledged the complexity of the funding landscape and the importance of defining funders and expanding the Hub's reach.



Figure 11: Dr. Emilia Antonio, GloPID-R Research and Policy Officer.

## 16. A VIEW FROM ASIA PACIFIC

**Prof. Choong-Min Ryu** of the Korea Research Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology (KRIBB), which represents the National Research Foundation of Korea, a GloPID-R member, presented the aims of the GloPID-R Asia Pacific Hub. There is a strong need for coordinated efforts in response to infectious diseases and pandemics in the Asia Pacific region. His proposal was structured around four pillars: regional specificity, global pandemic resilience, fostering collaboration during pandemics, and ensuring reasonable self-determination. Prof. Choong-Min Ryu highlighted the unique challenges faced in the Asia Pacific region, where high population density and geographic factors create conditions conducive to the rapid spread of infectious diseases. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of mutual support among countries, particularly considering the principle that "no one is safe until we are all safe." He also highlighted the significance of understanding the diverse cultures and socio-economic conditions in Asia, resulting in a need for tailored support. He discussed recent mapping and surveying activities, the successful kick-off conference, and plans for a second APIS forum. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of expanding GloPID-R membership in Asia and establishing national-level networking

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systems to better prepare for infectious disease outbreaks. He shared a vision of a sustainable Asia Pacific network for infectious disease preparedness, enabling rapid and systematic responses at local and regional levels.

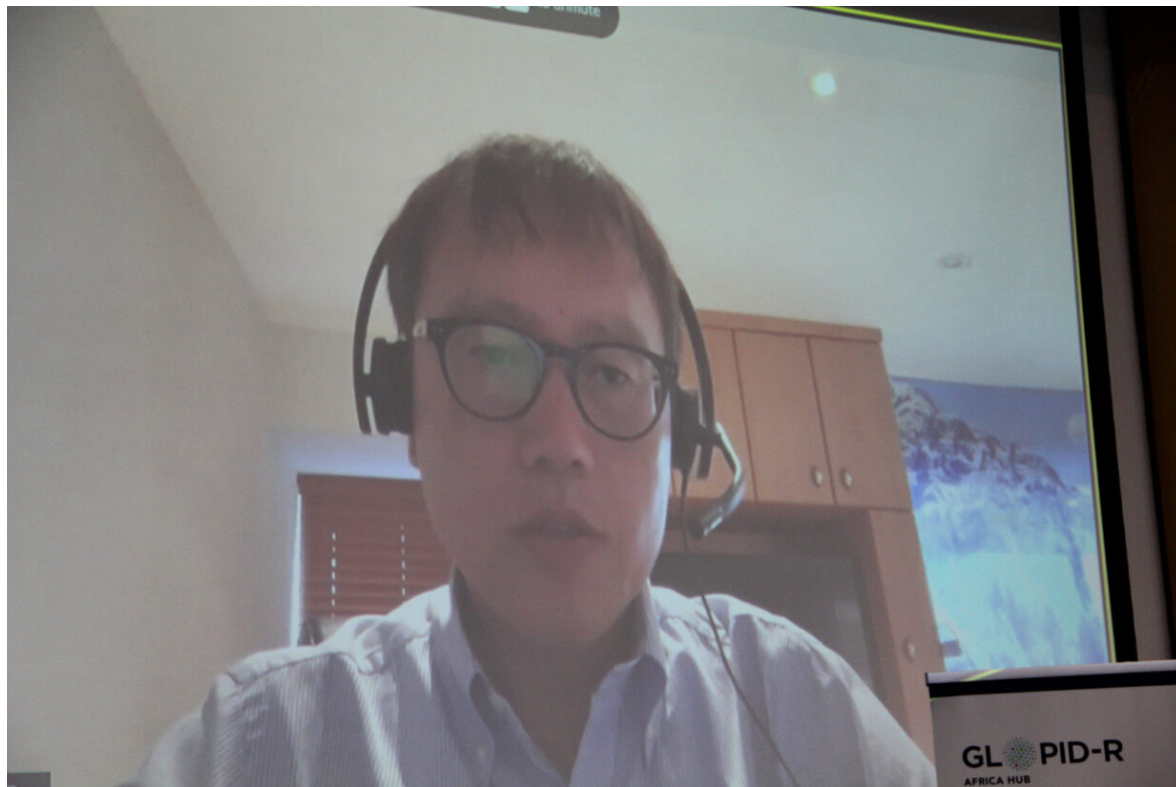


Figure 12: Prof. Choong-Min Ryu, Head of Infectious Disease Research Center, KRIBB.

## 17. BREAKAWAY SESSIONS: Q&A ON OBJECTIVES OF THE AFRICA HUB

Moderators: Dr. Beth Spooner & Dr. Sara Cooper (SAMRC)

Speaker 1: Dr. Hans Hagen

Speaker 2: Dr. Emilia Antonio

### **Moderators (Dr. Elizabeth Spooner & Dr. Sara Cooper)**

The breakaway sessions provide a forum to gather important feedback and formulate critical discussion points. The first group was chaired by Prof. Bongani Nkambule and Dr. Susan Nzenze and the spokesperson was Dr. Hans Hagen.

### **Feedback from Group 1, represented by Dr. Hans Hagen**

The discussion centered on key priorities and actions that should be taken within the first one or two years to prepare the GloPID-R Africa Hub effectively for future pandemics. The group emphasized the importance of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the hub's constituent parts, including its membership, potential board, and Secretariat, and of defining governance structures early on. It was

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highlighted that the Secretariat serves as a conduit between members and synthesizes information for discussion and decision making. Understanding the funding and research landscape was another critical focus, aiming not only to identify key players but also to comprehend their activities and foster local and global collaboration. The group recognized the need to coordinate funding and establish principles for funding models, even in the post-pandemic phase, to prevent critical research areas from being neglected. Evaluating impact and developing matrices for measuring progress were deemed essential, requiring ongoing discussion and development. Establishing strategic partnerships with other stakeholders, such as public health and research institutes, was seen as crucial for achieving collective goals. Finally, the importance of preparedness, including pre-vetted systems and rapid response mechanisms, was highlighted to ensure a swift and effective response in the event of an outbreak. These discussions reflected the overarching goal of shifting from "me first" to "we first" to enhance the collective impact of research efforts.

### **Moderators (Dr. Elizabeth Spooner & Dr. Sara Cooper)**

Dr. Elizabeth Spooner introduced Group 2, chaired by Prof. Moses Bockarie and Dr. Sara Cooper. The spokesperson was Dr. Emilia Antonio.



Figure 13: Dr. Elizabeth Spooner, Deputy Director and Clinical Trials Unit Co-Project Director, SAMRC.

### **Feedback from Group 2, represented by Dr. Emilia Antonio**

Group 2 engaged in insightful discussions focused on two critical areas: pandemic preparedness on the African continent and strengthening early warning and surveillance systems. The discussions revolved

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around key priorities for the GloPID-R Africa Hub, aligned with the objectives outlined by Prof. Charles Wiysonge. In particular, the group emphasized the need to assess existing preparedness and identify stakeholders at both country and regional levels. Recognizing the success of innovative platforms developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the group proposed building upon them to enhance pandemic surveillance. Much discussion focused on advocacy, particularly advocating for national bodies to oversee preparedness and funding at the country level and advocating for tailored global principles that consider the African context. Strengthening capacity in research funding governance and grant management was also highlighted with mention of the importance of effective institutions in attracting more funding to the continent. Lastly, the group addressed funding policies that account for the complexity of epidemics within pandemics. It emphasized the collaborative process of engaging regional organizations like the Africa Union to set objectives, implement agendas, and monitor progress for improved funding and preparedness across the continent.

## 18. PANEL DISCUSSION: WHAT WILL THE GLOPID-R AFRICA HUB LOOK LIKE?

Moderator: Prof. Mark Engel (SAMRC)

Speaker 1: Prof. Collet Dandara

Speaker 2: Dr. Elvis Temfack

Speaker 3: Dr. Thomas Nyirenda

Speaker 4: Dr. Alice Norton

Speaker 5: Dr. Hans Hagen



Figure 14: Panel discussion on the structure and role of the Africa Hub. From left to right: Dr. Elvis Temfack, Prof. Collet Dandara, Dr. Thomas Nyirenda, Dr. Alice Norton, and Dr. Hans Hagen.



Figure 15: Prof. Mark Engel, Chief Specialist Scientist, SAMRC Cochrane South Africa.

**Moderator (Prof. Mark Engel)**

In his introductory remarks, Prof. Mark Engel, a member of the Cochrane Centre and a recent addition to the team, explained that the purpose of this session – namely, to gather insights and input on the structure and role of the GloPID-R Africa Hub. Suggesting an open and flexible format for discussion, he presented the panel with six questions. These concerned the Hub's contributions to international collaboration, its effectiveness in fostering partnerships, strategies for coordinated funding, ensuring inclusivity and equity, enhancing research capabilities and knowledge sharing, and maintaining adaptability and responsiveness.



Figure 16: Prof. Collet Dandara, Professor of Human Genetics, University of Cape Town.

### **Speaker 1, Prof. Collet Dandara**

Speaker Collet Dandara is a Professor of Human Genetics and Principal Investigator of the Pharmacogenomics and Drug Metabolism Research Group, as well as Deputy Dean of Postgraduate Education at the University of Cape Town. He commended GloPID-R's mission to catalyze research and implementation in Africa. Emphasizing the importance of training in building expertise as a crucial foundation for research, he suggested that GloPID-R plays a significant role in assessing the relevance of current training programs and identifying new areas of expertise needed to advance research and implementation. This includes considering qualifications for roles like data curators and biomedical journalists. He also highlighted the need for collaboration in consolidating expertise and standard setting across Africa to ensure comprehensive training and research efforts.

### **Speaker 2, Dr. Elvis Temfack**

Dr. Temfack expressed support for GloPID-R's mission to improve pandemic preparedness and response, highlighting the crucial role of surveillance systems in epidemic and pandemic preparedness. He emphasized the need to identify high-risk organisms, develop detection tools for frontline health workers,

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and establish effective data collection and analysis mechanisms. He further underscored GloPID-R's potential as a platform for communication between researchers and funders, facilitating discussions and collaboration. He suggested that GloPID-R should focus on specific continental priorities, working transparently to define roles and responsibilities. Additionally, Dr. Temfack emphasized the importance of leveraging existing initiatives, addressing workforce development, health information exchange, and training curriculum enhancements. Continuous engagement with stakeholders will make it possible to achieve a mindset shift, towards integrating research into medical training and adapting to the dynamic nature of epidemics and pandemics.



Figure 17: Dr. Thomas Nyirenda, Strategic Partnerships & Capacity Development Manager, EDCTP.

### **Speaker 3, Dr. Thomas Nyirenda**

In the panel discussion, Dr. Thomas Nyirenda, representing EDCTP, emphasized the complexity of working in Africa due to its diverse cultural and historical backgrounds. He stressed that coordinating various funders in Africa is not a simple task and requires an understanding of different perspectives, objectives, and sources of funding. He further acknowledged that capacity-building is an essential aspect of GloPID-R's work, particularly to foster collaboration among international agencies across a continent characterized by varying cultures, levels of literacy, and different needs. Dr. Nyirenda suggested that GloPID-R's approach in Africa should be adapted to respond to these unique conditions and challenges. He emphasized the importance of involving communities in partnerships as well as the need to bridge the gap between research and disease control programs, particularly in government entities. Lastly, he advocated for aligning GloPID-R's priorities with the continental strategy set by the Africa Union to effectively address the complex challenges in Africa.

### **Speaker 4, Dr. Alice Norton**

In her remarks, Dr. Alice Norton, Head of the GloPID-R Research & Policy team, highlighted the crucial responsibility of listening, supporting, and strengthening the membership of GloPID-R. This approach is

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vital to ensure that GloPID-R's efforts align with the unique contexts and funding mechanisms in Africa. GloPID-R, she explained, is not a separate global organization but rather a collective of its members, including funders and observers. Relying on the leadership of SAMRC as coordinator of the Africa Hub Secretariat, the GloPID-R Africa Hub will bring together members to enhance the organization's impact. Dr. Norton reflected on key takeaways from the discussions, particularly the importance of prioritization and the need to define the underlying values which guide GloPID-R's work. She also raised the question of membership and equity, suggesting that defining what constitutes a funder in different countries will be vital for the African Hub.

### **Speaker 5, Dr. Hans Hagen**

Dr. Hans Hagen acknowledged the importance of letting the participants shape the future of GloPID-R in Africa. He expressed gratitude for two days of rich discussions and emphasized the collective drive and will of the participants, which bodes well for the future success of the GloPID-R Africa Hub. Dr. Hagen expressed his belief that the regional hub will help navigate the challenges of a complex and diverse landscape, including linguistic and cultural differences, across the African continent. He highlighted the significance of prioritizing commonalities before addressing local variations. GloPID-R has a role to play in aligning funders with on-the-ground needs. He advocated for scientific sovereignty and the strengthening of domestic funding structures. Additionally, Dr. Hagen suggested inter-African capacity strengthening programs and efforts to break down linguistic and cultural barriers. In closing, he considered the challenge of engaging countries without well-defined funding structures, especially those keen to learn from their neighbors. He called for a balanced approach to engage such countries without diluting GloPID-R's identity as an alliance of funders.

## **19. CLOSING REMARKS**

Dr Mongezi Mdhluhi gave closing remarks:

- He acknowledged the need to address how GloPID-R Africa Hub fits into the GloPID-R agenda and the need to focus on African priorities. The emphasis was on prioritizing African needs in science and research.
- He urged caution against creating neglected diseases while responding to pandemics like HIV and TB, emphasizing the importance of not neglecting certain diseases in the pursuit of addressing others.
- He highlighted the importance of addressing inequities in accessing diagnostics during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in Africa, and the disparities witnessed in healthcare.
- He stressed the necessity of investing in science, this includes engaging with funders, politicians, and society to stress the importance of scientific investment.
- He highlighted the importance of capacitating regulatory authorities to ensure the safety and efficacy of medical interventions.
- He advocated for continued engagement in a more relaxed environment, fostering ongoing discussions and collaborations.
- He expressed gratitude towards the moderators, speakers, and participants for their contributions, marking the end of the meeting with appreciation and a call for further collaboration.

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Figure 18: Dr. Mongezi Mdhuli, Chief Research Operation Officer, SAMRC and Co-Chair, GloPID-R.

## 20. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAUNCH EVENT

- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The GloPID-R Africa Hub was inaugurated with representatives from numerous African nations, international organizations, and research institutions. The hub aims to foster collaboration and partnerships between African and international research communities to strengthen the continent's capacity for infectious disease research.
- **Cutting-edge Research:** The GloPID-R Africa Hub will facilitate the collaboration of funders investing in groundbreaking research on infectious diseases, including emerging pathogens and neglected tropical diseases. This research is crucial for the African continent and global health security.
- **Capacity Building:** The Hub is committed to capacity-building efforts, including training and knowledge exchange programs, to empower African scientists and researchers in the fight against infectious diseases.
- **Rapid Response:** In line with GloPID-R's mission, the Africa Hub will facilitate rapid response mechanisms, enabling swift coordination and resource allocation during a pandemic or disease outbreak.
- **Strengthening Resilience:** Establishing the GloPID-R Africa Hub is seen as a vital step in strengthening the resilience of African nations against infectious diseases, which have historically posed significant health and economic challenges.

The GloPID-R Africa Hub Launch event was an important milestone in global health and a testament to the power of international collaboration. As the world faces ongoing and emerging health threats, today

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more than ever, the commitment of organizations like GloPID-R to unite diverse stakeholders in pursuing solutions is critical. The GloPID-R Africa Hub's inauguration in Cape Town indicates that the fight against infectious diseases knows no borders and that concerted efforts are being made to ensure a healthier and safer future for all.



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**E D C T P**

**21. LIST OF ATTENDEES (IN PERSON AND ONLINE)**

Table 1: List for the GloPID-R Africa Hub launch – in person and remote participants.

	Title	Surname	Name	Organization
1.	Dr	Alam	Uzma	SFA Foundation
2.	Mr	Alasow	Mohamed Ahmed	FMoH-Somalia
3.	Dr	Allen	Elizabeth	TGHN
4.	Dr	Antonio	Emilia	GloPID-R
5.	Prof	Bockarie	Moses	ECDTP
6.	Dr	Bona	Chita	UNZA
7.	Dr	Cerf	Marlon	SAMRC
8.	Prof	Cooper	Sara	SAMRC
9.	Prof	Dandara	Collet	UCT
10.	Prof	Egieyeh	Samuel	UWC
11.	Prof	Engel	Mark	SAMRC
12.	Prof	Gordon	Richard	SAMRC
13.	Prof	Gray	Glenda	SAMRC
14.	Dr	Hagen	Hans-Eckhardt	GloPID-R

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15.	Dr	Jaca	Anelisa	SAMRC
16.	Prof	Kengne	Andre	SAMRC
17.	Mr	Kgomo	Karabo	SAMRC
18.	Ms	Mabote-Eyde	Lynette	SAPAM
19.	Dr	Makubalo	Lindiwe	WHO AFRO
20.	Dr	Massawe	Prosper	COSTECH
21.	Dr	Mathebula	Lindi	SAMRC
22.	Prof	Matjila	Mushi	UCT
23.	Dr	Mdhuli	Mongezi	SAMRC
24.	Dr	Samodien	Ebrahim	SAMRC
25.	Mr	A	Jeffthas	SAMRC
26.	Mr	Moetlediwa	Marakiya	SAMRC
27.	Prof	Mlisana	Koleka	NICD
28.	Dr	Mulder	Michelle	SAMRC
29.	Ms	Ngcete	Zoleka	SAMRC
30.	Prof	Nkambule	Bongani	UKZN
31.	Dr	Norton	Alice	GloPID-R
32.	Dr	Nyirenda	Thomas	EDCTP
33.	Dr	Nzenze	Susan	NICD
34.	Dr	Oduwole	Elizabeth	SAMRC
35.	Ms	Reetsang	Evelyn	NAHPA
36.	Ms	Ruffell	Carol	DNDI GARDP SA
37.	Ms	Selematsela	Modiegi	DSI
38.	Dr	Spooner	Elizabeth	SAMRC
39.	Ms	Stegeman	Kate	MSF

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40.	Dr	Temfack	Elvis	AFRICA CDC
41.	Dr	Zishiri	Vincent	US Embassy (PTA)
42.	Prof	Wiysonge	Charles	WHO AFRO
43.	Mr	Salamo	Deon	SAMRC
44.	Ms	Kiara	Soobrayan	Unitaid
45.	Mrs	Lee	Jieun	Korea Research Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology
46.	Ms	Mohlabi	Khanya	SAMRC
47.	Mr	Ganesh	Robert	SAMRC
48.	Ms	Mills	Lisa	GloPID R
49.	Dr	Chikwamba	Rachel	CSIR
50.	Ms	Loots	Glaudina	DST
51.	Mr	Birch	Dwain	SAMRC
52.	Mr	Booi	Goodman	SAMRC
53.	Dr	Le	Thuy Minh Tri	GloPID R
54.	Prof	Karim	Salim Abdool	CAPRISA
55.	Ms	Shaffer	Mary	GloPID R
56.	Mrs	Malinga	Thobile	SAMRC
57.	Dr	Sow	Abdourahmane	Institut Pasteur De Dakar
58.	Dr	Ramokolo	Vundli	SAMRC
59.	Ms	Perez-casas	carmen	UNITAID
60.	Mr	Tsedu	Tendani	SAMRC
61.	Mr	Ufot	Rekiya Eyiwuri	WHO-AFRO